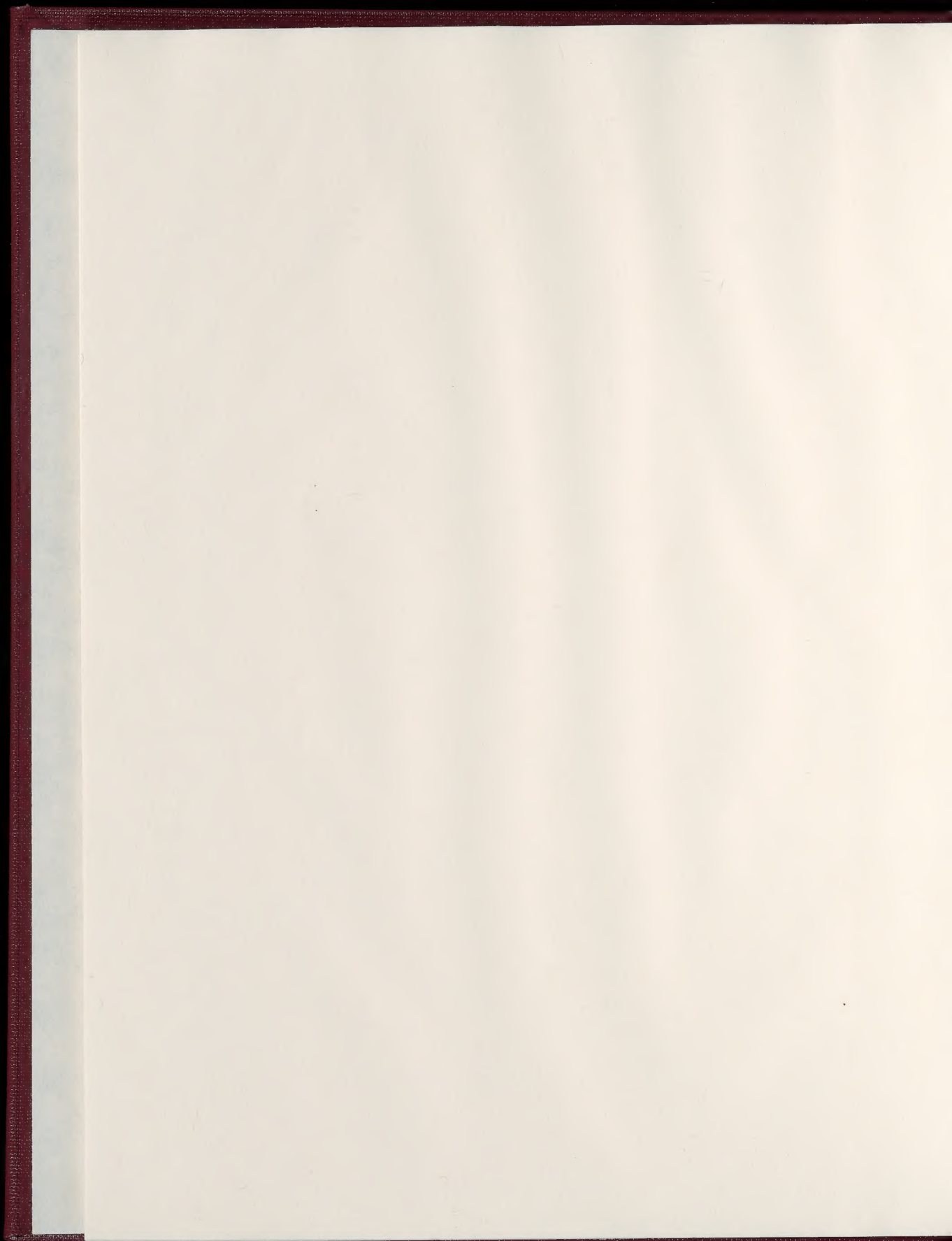
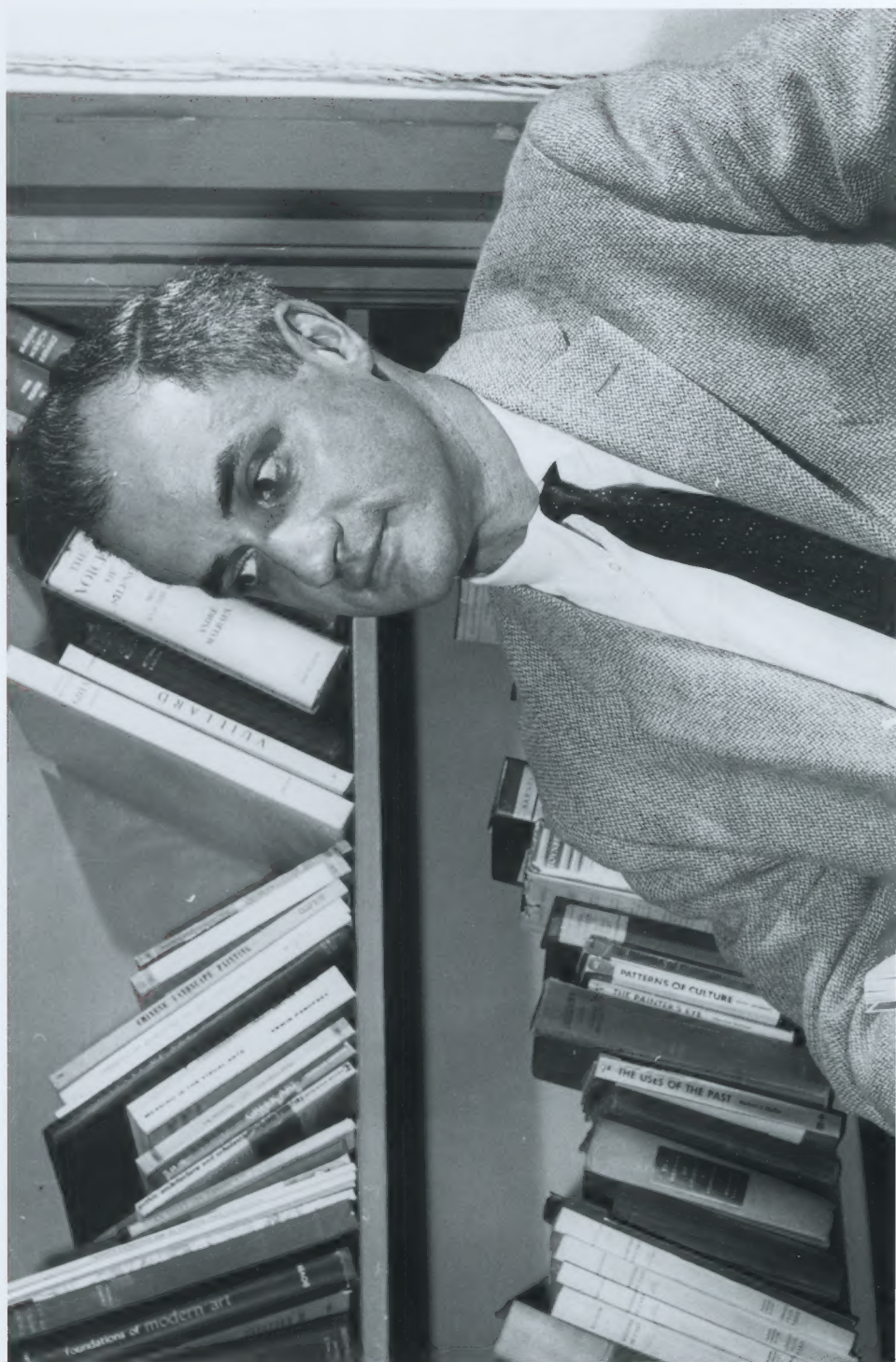


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MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Sherman E. Lee

Interviewed by Joel Gardner

VOLUME I

Art History Oral Documentation Project

Completed under the auspices
of the

Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

and the
Getty Center for the History of
Art and the Humanities

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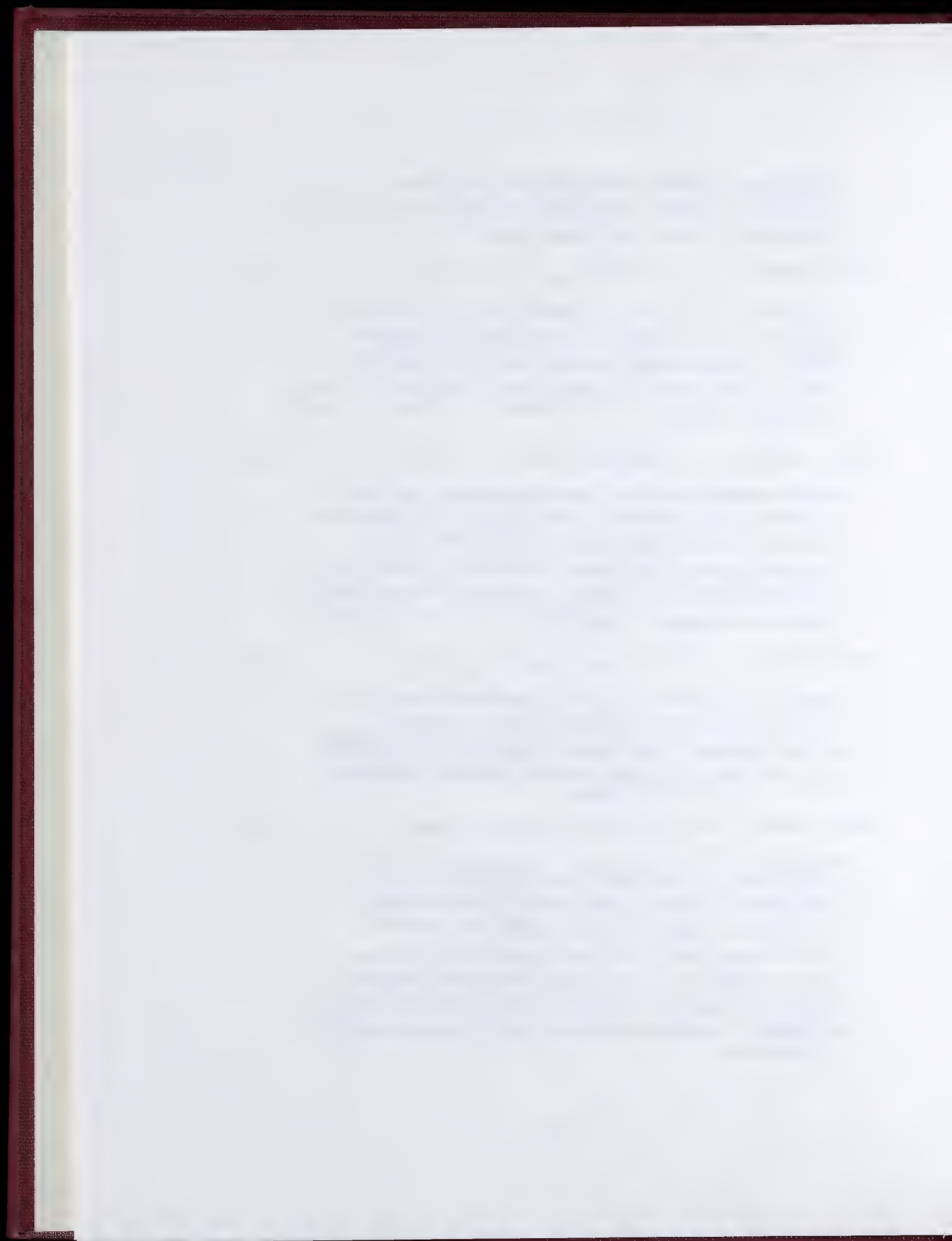
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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: April 19, 1918, Seattle, Washington.

Education: B.A., M.A., History, American University;
Ph.D., Art History, Case Western Reserve University.

Military Service: ensign, lieutenant, United States
Naval Reserve, 1944-46.

Spouse: Ruth Ward Lee; four children.

CAREER HISTORY:

Curator, Far Eastern art, Detroit Institute of Arts,
1941-46.

Adviser on collections, Department of Arts and
Monuments, Civil Information and Education Section,
General Headquarters, Supreme Commander, Allied Powers,
Tokyo, 1946-48.

Assistant director, Seattle Art Museum, 1948-50;
associate director, 1950-52.

Lecturer, art history, University of Washington, 1948-
52.

Curator, oriental art, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1952-
83; assistant director, 1957; associate director, 1958;
director, 1958-83.

Lecturer, art history, Case Western Reserve University,
1958; professor, art, 1962-83. Adjunct professor,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1984-
present.

AFFILIATIONS:

American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

American Arts Alliance, chair, 1979-82.

Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, trustee.

Asia Society, trustee.



Association of Art Museum Directors, vice-president, 1963; president, 1965.

Century Association, 1968-present.

Freer Gallery of Art, visiting committee.

Isamu Noguchi Foundation, trustee, 1984-present.

National Council for the Humanities, councillor, 1970-75.

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, France.

Order of the North Star, Sweden.

Order of the Sacred Treasure, Third Class, Japan.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

Chinese Landscape Painting. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1954.

Streams and Mountains without End: A Northern Sung Handscroll and Its Significance in the History of Early Chinese Painting. With Wen Fong. Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1955.

Rajput Painting. New York: Asia Society, 1960.

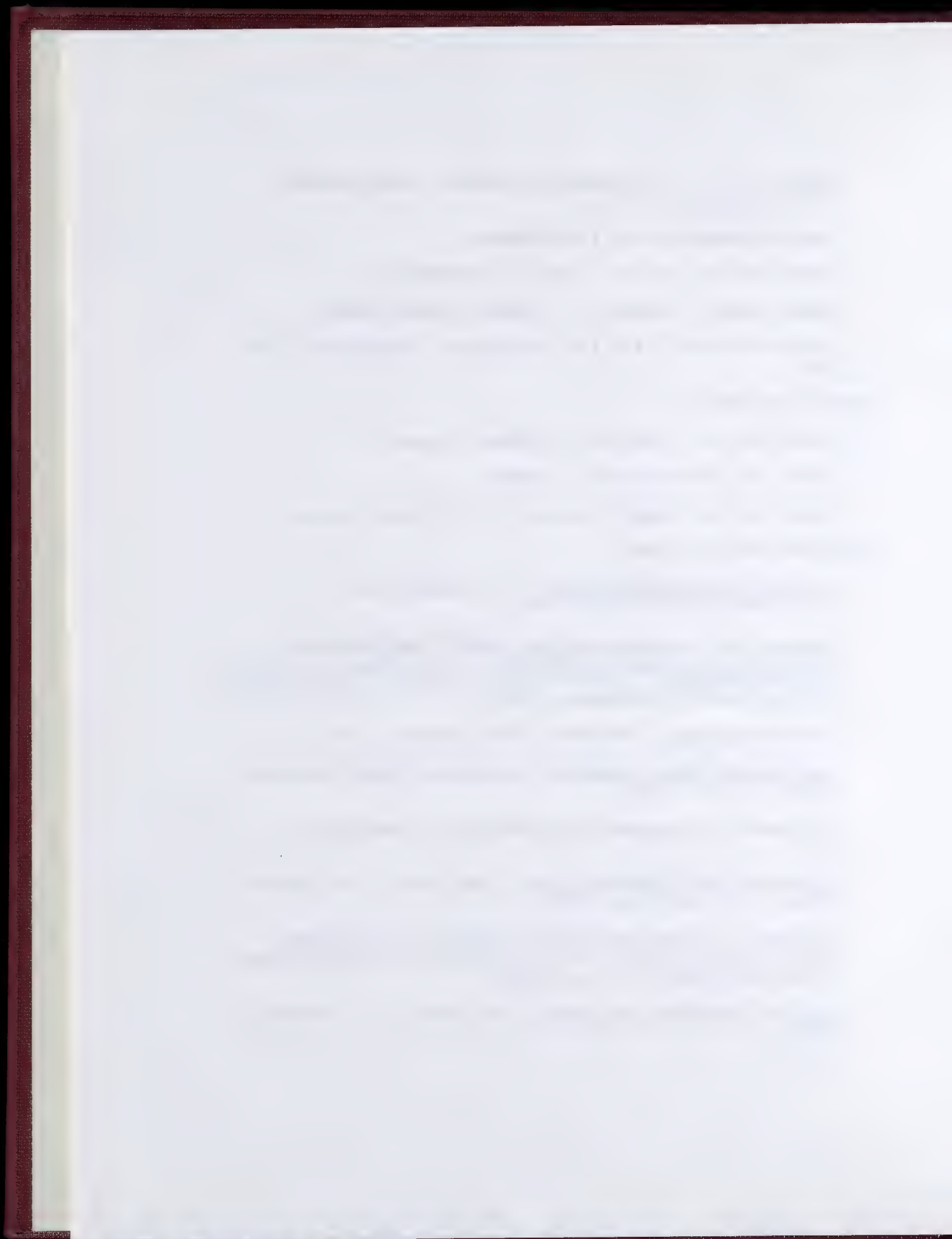
Japanese Decorative Style. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1961.

Tea Taste in Japanese Art. New York: Asia Society, 1963.

A History of Far Eastern Art. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1964. Fifth edition, 1994.

Chinese Art under the Mongols: The Art of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368. With Wai-Kam Ho. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968.

Ancient Cambodian Sculpture. New York: Asia Society, 1969.



The Colors of Ink: Chinese Paintings and Related Ceramics from the Cleveland Museum of Art. With James Robinson. New York: Asia Society, 1974.

Asian Art: Selections from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd. New York: Asia Society, part 1, 1970; part 2, 1975.

On Understanding Art Museums. Editor. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.

The Genius of Japanese Design. New York: Kodansha International, 1981.

One Thousand Years of Japanese Art. With Michael R. Cunningham and Ursula Korneitchouck. New York: Japan Society, 1981.

Past and Present: East and West. New York: G. Braziller, 1983.

Reflections of Reality in Japanese Art. With Michael R. Cunningham and James T. Ulak. Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1983.



INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Joel Gardner, Oral Historian, Gardner and Associates.
B.A., M.S., French, Tulane University; M.A.,
Journalism, UCLA.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Lee's home, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Dates, length of sessions: April 7, 1992 (150 minutes); April 8, 1992 (253); April 9, 1992 (89); July 13, 1992 (135); July 14, 1992 (154); July 15, 1992 (200); July 16, 1992 (245).

Total number of recorded hours: 20.50

Persons present during interview: Lee and Gardner.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This is one in a series of interviews intended to examine the development of art history as a professional discipline and conducted under the joint auspices of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and the UCLA Oral History Program.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Lee's childhood and education and moving through his positions at the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Cleveland Museum of Art. Major topics discussed include Lee's work with the Department of Arts and Monuments in postwar Japan; exhibitions, development of the collection, and organizational changes at the Cleveland Museum of Art; Lee's involvement in professional organizations and activities; and current trends in the museum world.

EDITING:

Rebecca Stone, editorial assistant, edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

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Lee reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made a number of corrections and additions.

Teresa Barnett, principal editor, prepared the table of contents. Alex Cline, editor, assembled the biographical summary. Stone prepared the interview history and compiled the index.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

APRIL 7, 1992

GARDNER: To begin with, I'd like to have you start off by talking about you and your family background. So, for the record, if you could tell me where you were born, when, and then tell me something about the Lee family.

LEE: Well, I was born in Seattle, Washington, on April 19, 1918. April 19, as all good New Englanders know, is Patriots Day and the anniversary of the battle of Breed's Hill or Bunker Hill, whichever you want to call it. And that introduces you to my family, because they were basically from New England. My father [Emery H. Lee] was born in Malden, Massachusetts, and his family goes back to the New England Lees. The one perhaps most remembered member of the family was the general who was cursed out by Washington at the Battle of Monmouth. I know some of the Lees and also other members of the family at that time were Tories and went to Canada, but basically Father's father and his grandfather were from Massachusetts. And my mother [Adelia Baker Lee]'s family goes back really first to Indiana and then to Ohio. One of my ancestors on that side of the family-- Two of them, two brothers, were kidnapped by Indians about 1814 or so and managed to kill three Indians and escape back home. They were the



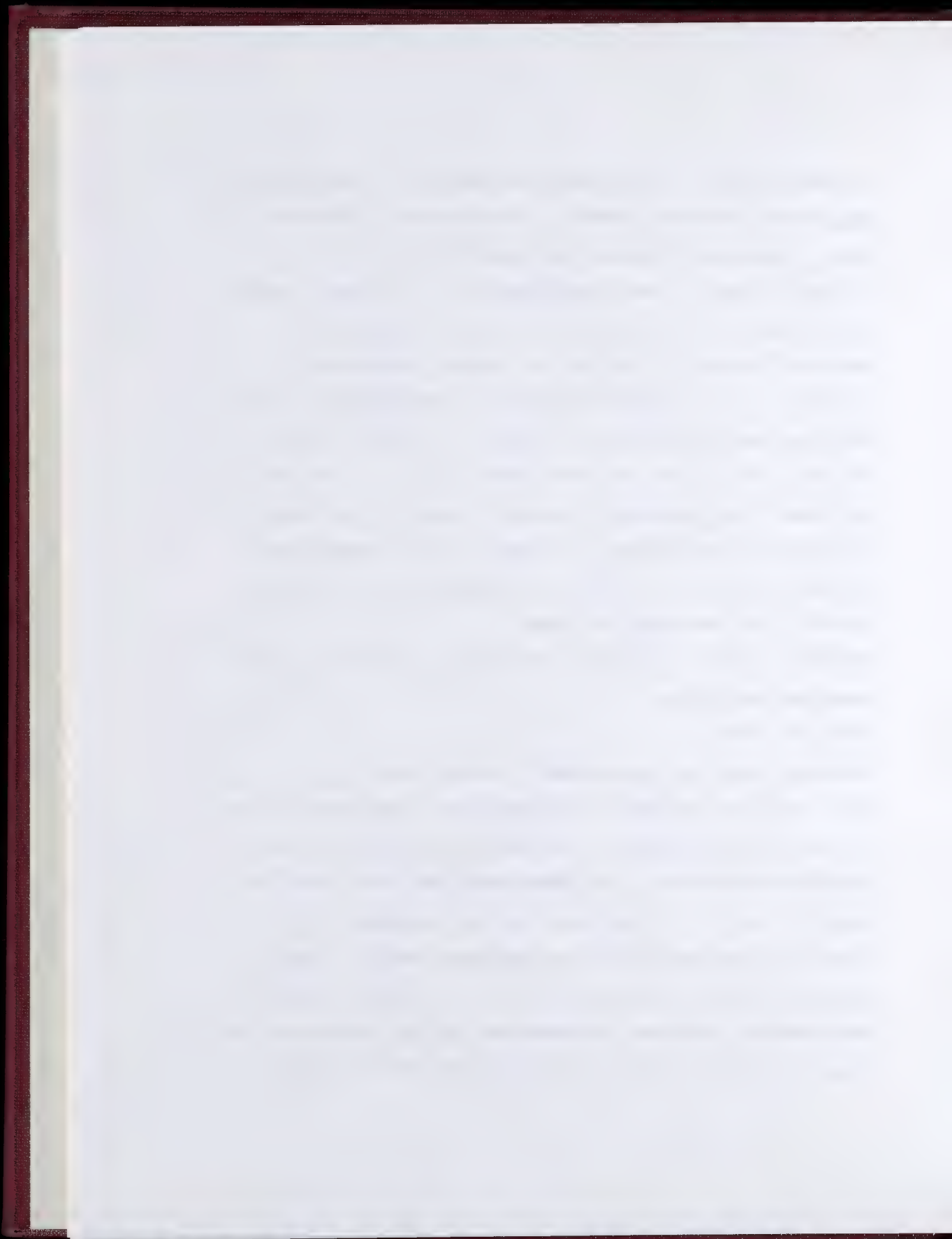
Johnston boys. And that feat was recorded in The Story of Ohio by William Dean Howells. So my mother's side had all that. My mother's mother--my grandmother--was Carrie [Johnston] Baker. Her grandfather was an adjutant general during the Civil War. She was a big Civil War buff, Northern naturally. So that was part of the family tradition. Both were avid members of the Daughters of the American Revolution [DAR]. I began as a member of the Children of the American Revolution, until I hit college, and then I was supposed to become a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. But when I hit college I began to look at things a little differently, and I just didn't follow up on that kind of thing.

GARDNER: I didn't even know there was a Children of the American Revolution.

LEE: Oh, yes.

GARDNER: What was your mother's family name?

LEE: Her name was Carrie Johnston Baker, and Johnston was the main line going back. We also had ancestors in the seventeenth century in New Amsterdam [New York], the Van Buskirk family. So the Lees, the Van Buskirks, the Johnstons, and then there was also some family called Kimball. And my grandmother was with this DAR. She was very keenly interested in genealogy and did quite a bit of research in that matter in the New York Public Library



when we were living in New York City. That's where I picked up all this material, because she was very keen that we understand that we had this background.

My father went to the University of Washington in Seattle. He moved out there from the East to make a living. He went to the university there for three years--he didn't finish his B.S.--and he was in what is called radio engineering. He met my mother at the university. She didn't finish. And they were married in Seattle and I was born in Seattle. There is an old picture of me as a child of about six or seven months, playing with a leaf of grass, on the site of the Seattle Art Museum in Volunteer Park. Since the museum wasn't there and nobody knew there was going to be one there, there is no way I could have been influenced by that location. But it's kind of an interesting coincidence.

Father was a radio engineer, and his first job was out with a firm, a radio engineering firm, when radio was just new in that time, in 1918, 1919. A firm called Kilbourn and Clark. And he worked there a few months, I guess. The federal government was setting up a new department under the Department of Commerce for the federal regulation of the airwaves. Among the special responsibilities of the Department of Commerce was the use of radio on shipboard as a means of safety, so all the



radios on all the ships that came into New York Harbor and docked there and had business there had to be inspected by federal government representatives. They set up a department--it was called the radio division, I guess--and father applied for a civil service job and got that job. We moved to New York City when I was less than one year old, in 1919.

So we started living in Brooklyn, in Brooklyn Heights, which was then not such a great place. It had come down some, and then later on it went up. But while we were there it was inexpensive brownstone housing. Father was inspecting radios on ships all the time, and they were beginning to set up broadcasting. So it was a busy time. His office was in the subtreasury building, which is the building right down on Wall Street where Washington gave his first inaugural speech. It's a beautiful neoclassic building with very thick walls. I used to go there quite often, not on school days, but in the afternoon. I remember it being a wonderful place to visit. Of course New York was quite different in 1919 to 1932, which was when we were there. The subway system was marvelous and very safe. My grandmother had come east. She came east a couple of times before she came east permanently, because my mother wasn't a terribly healthy woman. Grandmother finally decided rather than take the



train east and go back to Seattle and so forth, she would come and stay. She really had probably at least as much or even more to do with my upbringing than anyone else. She was very fussy and very straitlaced. But she thought nothing of letting me get on the subway at age seven or eight or nine to go up to the Bronx Zoo or the Seventh Regiment Armory, where I used to fly model airplanes. It was just a wonderful life.

We moved from Brooklyn Heights out to Flatbush and different places, mostly near Kings Highway and the old Dutch Reformed church, which was built in sixteen [hundred] something. Of course, Flatbush then was just salt marshes all the way out from where we were to the Rockaway Beach. Floyd Bennett Field wasn't built in 1926, so before that there was nothing out there. You could take your bike and ride out and cross a wooden bridge to the strand. There was nothing on the strand except a Coast Guard station. So you could go fishing or go camping. It was really a very pleasant place to live, with a combination of rural qualities plus big city. I don't know how much detail you want me to go into.

GARDNER: Oh, you're doing so well. I'm riveted. Let me ask you this, what was your schooling like? What kind of school were you in?

LEE: I was going to get into that. Before we moved out



to Flatbush, we moved from Brooklyn Heights to a big apartment house which was up-- I know it wasn't far from PS [public school] 177. Grandmother, as I said, was very straitlaced and also very careful, also very sort of aware that she and the Lees were somehow supposed to be different from other people around. We had many friends who were not, certainly, Sons or Daughters of the American Revolution. But she was very, very fussy. For instance, one of the first things I remember with any clarity is that we lived in this big apartment house and I used to play out--this was now sort of the mid-twenties, I guess--in the places where construction had begun. They had excavated, but they hadn't built anything. So there were big piles of dirt and excavations and a wonderful place to play military games, which, of course, kids always like. But I had very few friends, because Grandmother watched over me very carefully. There's a movie, a movie with Harold Lloyd, called Grandma's Boy--well, that's what the situation was. She used to walk me from the apartment house to the school, PS 177, to make sure I got there safely. And then she used to meet me there at lunchtime, and we would go just around the corner, I remember, to a very sort of old-fashioned delicatessen with wonderful sausages and Swiss cheese and so on. That's where we had lunch. There are all kinds of little odds and ends and



fragments I remember.

My grammar school was PS 119, which was out in Flatbush. By then we were out there. I won the history medal, awarded by the American Legion, as having the best grades and record in history. I won the science medal. I did not get the medal that was awarded to the best person in shop. Shop was very important. And my grandmother was incensed and went to the principal and asked what had happened. He made a big mistake. Instead of saying, "Well, someone else deserved it," he said, "Well, your son really should have had it, but we thought that another boy, who was going on and so forth, should get it." She was even more incensed. It was very, very embarrassing.

Anyhow, my friends were mostly-- We played some sandlot baseball. It was the principal sport, I remember. I also began hitting balls by myself--tennis balls. These were duplex houses in Flatbush, and our next-door neighbor was Italian. These were single houses, but next to it part of the land was an old barn, a relic of the farm area there, and he used to press grapes in season to make wine. This was during Prohibition. Grandmother was an ardent prohibitionist and she used to try to get him in trouble again and again, but she finally laid off. I used the barn door as a practice thing for hitting tennis balls. So I played baseball, I played tennis. I hadn't been on



a tennis court.

All my friends decided they were going to--not all but most of them--go to Brooklyn Technical High School. I insisted that I had to go to Brooklyn Technical High School, too. It's a long way away, and finally they gave in. I had to get up at about five every morning, because the only way to get there was an old-fashioned streetcar with the little wood-burning stove in it and a big box with brass handles and so on. It took about an hour and a quarter to get from our house to Brooklyn Technical High School. So that's where I started high school. I was interested. I learned mechanical drawing. I learned about wood treatment.

I heard there was going to be a tennis tournament, so I signed up. I had never been on a tennis court; I'd only hit balls against the wall. Of course in the first round--There was a very fancy tennis place over on Brooklyn Parkway. The first person I drew in the tennis tournament was the captain of the tennis team. It was the most embarrassing moment--my first great embarrassment--because I was hitting the balls over the fence and everything, and he'd just stand on the court and make me go and get them and come back. Oh, it was just dreadful.

By the end of the first semester the man who taught shop, Mr. Foster--they had an in-house thing at the end of



the first semester--took my parents aside, and my grandmother was there too. He said, "You know, it is perfectly absurd for this kid to be in Brooklyn Technical High School. He's good in the academic subjects and he can do the others too, but it's foolish. All these people are basically going to go on in engineering or this will be the end of their education." So they changed me. From there they enrolled me in Erasmus Hall High School, which was in Flatbush not too far from where we lived. And I think I went there a couple of weeks and then I was transferred, because they had just opened a brand-new high school which was quite close to us called James Madison High School, also Flatbush. So I was sent over there, and that's where I took my first two years of high school education. I remember relatively little about the teaching there. I know I remember trying out for the baseball team. I didn't do too badly, but I didn't make the team. I was a freshman, anyhow. So that--

GARDNER: Had you had any exposure to the arts at this point?

LEE: Well, I was getting there. Grandmother was interested in literature and Mark Twain. I read a great deal. One reason was because in my eighth year I had a very bad experience. First I fell down the stone stairs in the apartment house--this is before we went to

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
IN TWO VOLUMES
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
OF THE BARR

VOLUME THE SECOND
CONTAINING THE HISTORY
FROM 1700 TO 1780
BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. BENTLEY, 1780

Flatbush, when I was going to PS 177--and broke my collarbone. That put me in bed for a couple of weeks. Then I contracted pneumonia. I was up from the collarbone and then I contracted pneumonia, which then developed into pleurisy. In those days that was bad news. There were no antibiotics or anything of that nature. The family doctor, whose name was Loughlin, who was later--I think two years later--murdered in the dead of night while he was crossing some empty lot near his house-- Involved with some kind of marital problem, I believe. Anyhow, he was the doctor, and I was operated on, on the dining room table, in the apartment. I remember before the operation I was scared to death. I locked myself in the bathroom to try to get out of everything. So they had to break the door, break the lock, get me out. I remember the smell of that chloroform with great, great displeasure. And they operated. I was literally in bed for almost six months. I had a tube in my back--I have a big scar on my back still--for draining your lungs and so forth. So I was sort of out of school for almost a year.

By the time I graduated my eight years of grammar school-- I graduated two years ahead. So I graduated at age twelve instead of fourteen. And that wasn't so good, because that meant that all through high school here was a twelve-year-old or thirteen-year-old trying to make the



baseball team against eighteen-year-olds and so on. So that kind of put me down a bit in thinking about my marvelous athletic abilities. And I still was trying tennis despite the terrible experience at Brooklyn Tech. But I basically was sort of a sissy.

I read a lot. My grandmother urged me to read Civil War history, which I did. I knew a lot. I knew everything about the Civil War that you could possibly imagine. I read Greek history. I read Mark Twain. I read all the usual trash that young kids also read: the [Joseph] Altsheler books, the Hardy Boys, Robin Hood. Of course I loved Treasure Island and all that. I got in the habit of reading a lot. Grandmother is the one who got me into that.

She also took me on occasional cultural journeys. We went, for instance, once to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and my first memory of anyone on stage or singing was Maria Jeritza, a red-headed opera diva. Grandmother took me to the Brooklyn Museum, which I remember basically in terms of a staircase, great staircases that go around a central court that go from the lower floor to the upper floor, each with a landing between the flights. On that landing there was a big case, a glass case, with a suit of Japanese armor, because I remember a mask with mustaches and the big antler ornaments on the helmet. I don't think



it predisposed me to oriental art, but I remember it. At the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] the memory is more ordinary. Almost everyone remembers the Egyptian mummy. And of course at the Metropolitan--up until the refurbishing of the Egyptian galleries by the architects who did the new wings at the Metropolitan Museum--they still had that case, which was a square case that was about forty, forty-two inches square that you looked down at. Of course it was an earth pit grave with a curled-up skeleton and a bowl and some grain. That I remember well. I really don't remember anything other than that at the Metropolitan Museum, except it was a museum.

Going back a minute to show you why I said I was somewhat of a sissy, partly because of my youth in relation to the others in the class-- In PS 177, for example, they always had a big spelling bee involving all the students--the school spelling bee. That year I won it, and Grandmother was very proud. She thought it was terrific. But it always had been won by a girl. Always. So they proudly presented me with the book they'd bought before--of course thinking it was going to be a girl--a copy of Heidi. And you can imagine how that went over.

GARDNER: Were there any teachers that you had? You mention in the earlier part there weren't, but--

LEE: My only memory of a grammar school teacher is Miss



Sorenson at PS 119, who taught music. And the reason I remember her is because she was a very tall, well-developed Swedish type. She had gorgeous legs, and that I remember. I don't remember the names of any other teachers in grammar school. I remember my first two years in high school, not my third year in high school. I remember several teachers. I remember vividly Miss Nissle, who taught French. She had the most amazing pair of breasts that ever appeared, and that I remember vividly. I went to Erasmus for just a few weeks. Then I went to James Madison. I didn't finish there, but I went there a year and a half. Then Father was transferred to what was now the Federal Radio Commission. It was, I think, separate from the Department of Commerce then. He was transferred to Detroit. So we moved to Detroit at the end of my sophomore year at James Madison. Now, let me think if there is anything else about New York that needs to be hashed out.

GARDNER: Or we can always come back to it.

LEE: You can always come back to it. It probably will occur to me as we-- So we moved to Detroit. The high school I went to was Cooley High School. We lived in sort of a better kind of house, a brick house. The houses we lived in in Flatbush were duplexes, framed duplexes. I do remember in New York Father was always



having problems with second mortgages and making ends meet. Before we moved to Detroit, he had come up through the civil service, when he was in charge of the New York office. He was transferred to Detroit so that he would be supervisor of the whole region, not just Detroit. So he was moving up very well. And he tried to get me interested in radio engineering and so forth. I built a receiver, I built a transmitter, but it just didn't take with me. I had a very tough time with mathematics. Especially when I hit calculus in college, it was perfectly clear any dreams I had for being a physicist or astronomer were just pure baloney. But he was very much interested in radio engineering. He had an elaborate transmitter--a ham radio. He was in touch with people from all over the world with that thing. And he was very good at it and he rose very rapidly in the civil service. But it just didn't interest me.

During the end of Prohibition, just before the election of [Franklin D.] Roosevelt in 1932, father had to work with the Treasury Department--the people who were enforcing the Volsted Act. Because they were using the radio, you see, as a means of getting their boats that they sent to the beaches all out in the ocean to Long Island for unloading the scotch and gin from England and so forth. That was happening all the time, and the radio



people were cooperating with the Treasury Department in trying to catch these dastardly people who were bringing in liquor. I remember some of the treasury agents who came to the house. They had a big problem, because one of the major transmitters for the bootleggers they couldn't locate, and it was a thorn in their flesh. They finally developed--again, this was all a long time ago--a system of beaming in on the transmittal thing. So they could zero in on the location, or begin to get fixes, what they call fixes, and gradually get it more refined. It finally wound up that they discovered that the transmitter was just around the corner from our house, which was very clever of the bootleggers. They put it right smack in the house about three houses away, around the corner. I remember the great excitement when they finally raided that place and got that under control.

The other thing was that there was one big excitement, which was due again to my father's position. He called up and asked me to come down to the subtreasury building office as soon as I could and take the subway--it only took about twenty minutes, fifteen minutes--because he wanted me to see something. So I went down there, and there in his office was Charles Lindbergh. Lindbergh was getting his radio permit for his flight. And I was shown Mr. Lindbergh and Mr. Lindbergh shook my hand and I



remember seeing him--I looked like just a little kid of course. Later he sent me an autographed photograph, which I think is still in my files somewhere.

GARDNER: I hope so.

LEE: Yes. Well, we moved to Detroit, and obviously a better house and a better section of town as far as Detroit went. I went to Cooley High School, and I only went there one year. There I met a student adviser, Dr. Blanchard, a very nice man with a mustache and blue eyes, an outdoorsman, very much an outdoor type--fishing and so on. He had a small camp, where he took some of the boys and some of the athletes at the school, up on the Au Sable River--not the northern peninsula, but the northern part of the lower peninsula. He taught me a lot about fishing. He introduced me to a native up in the town of Mio [Michigan], which is the nearest town to where we stayed, who was an avid fisherman and fished at night for large brown trout. That was what we especially liked to do. I learned a lot about fishing and the woods. I was always interested in fishing.

Somehow or another when I got to grammar school, I saw a book on trout fishing and I read that, and I said, "I've got to try this." My father wasn't interested in that stuff at all. I bedeviled the family. Really, I must have been a terrible pest. The first time I went



fishing, we went out--Long Island--drove out to Lake Ronkonkomo, which is now solid wall-to-wall houses. Then it was lovely and open. They had what they called Indian moccasin flowers growing wild in the woods, and we had a picnic lunch. The stream that made Lake Ronkonkomo had some trout in it. I started out, I remember, trying with a Montreal, a maroon-colored fly. I couldn't catch anything with it. I had a steel rod--just awful stuff. Then I tried salmon eggs and I didn't catch anything.

So then I bedeviled them to take me up to Katonah. The city reservoirs have very good bass fishing. I got a casting rod and some plugs, and there I caught my first fish, or bass, and was very excited. And I caught a few more. I remember one thing happened that was sort of symbolic. I had a new plug called a bass-orino--a diving one, weighted a bit--that had an aluminum head or steel head and a wooden plug. And it was brand-new. I had been casting, and Father said, "Well, you're not casting hard enough. You've got to really put more into it." He said, "Here, let me show you." And he took the rod and he wound up, and of course he snapped the plug. This new plug went sailing all by itself almost three-quarters away across the lake into the deepest part. It was gone. He just handed me the rod and he turned around and walked away.

Then I got him to take me up to the northwest corner



of New Jersey. There's a wonderful trout stream, still quite good, called Flat Brook. It's right near Port Jervis. I fished, and I saw people catching trout, and I learned how you should cast a fly. I began to do that, and the next year they left me on a farm up on the Neversink River.

GARDNER: They just left you there this time?

LEE: For a week. They boarded me at this farm and I could fish to my heart's content. I really became sort of a fishing nut.

Also I forgot to mention, in New York I played a lot of sandlot baseball. I had a lot of friends who were sort of athletic types, and I tried that. And I played reasonably well. I made the high school baseball team in my senior year in Washington--we'll get to that.

GARDNER: Did you go to see the Dodgers play at all?

LEE: Oh, yes. Ebbets Field was a great place. I do remember there. I remember Dazzy Vance pitching with his fantastic windup, and I remember seeing Harry Heilmann, who then played with the Cincinnati Reds. He played in right field and Babe Herman played right field for Brooklyn. And Long George Kelly. I remember I was very keen about baseball. Ebbets Field was a great place to go. It was just marvelous.

Also, in New York I was very interested and Father



was-- It was something we could share, because he liked putting these radio things together. I became interested in flying model airplanes. Not the kinds that sort of realistically represent a plane, but for-duration kinds of planes that you flew at the Seventh Regiment Armory, made of paper and various thin pieces of balsa wood and long rubber bands that could unwind forever. I could fly a plane and have it stay up ten or twelve minutes. Of course, later on they began to have planes that would stay up for thirty minutes. I never got that good. Anyhow, I got to be pretty good at it. As a matter of fact, I won for my age in the city competition. I think it was my first year in high school.

Now we can go back to Detroit. Doc Blanchard in Detroit really taught me an awful lot about the woods, camping and hiking. I bought from New York, through the mail-order catalog--my parents paid for it--a small one-man tent from Abercrombie, not Abercrombie and Fitch, but David Abercrombie, who was an outfitter for really good camping material. I had waxed linen bags for food and a Duluth packsack. My parents would drive me up to Mio and drop me off and come back and get me in a month. And I'd just manage up there.

GARDNER: Really?

LEE: Oh, yes. This was when I was about sixteen. I used



to do that every summer for two or three years or so.

GARDNER: How did they feel about that?

LEE: Well, Doc Blanchard had his little camp not far away. Occasionally he'd ask me to help out, because he had boys that were twelve to fourteen, and I was about fifteen. I'd help out with some of the things they had to do: take them to go fishing or do this, that, or the other. So I was used to a degree of solitude. And I didn't mind being alone, I rather enjoyed it. I loved the outdoors.

I was playing more and more tennis. In Detroit, I began to get better. Now, I have to make sure I don't transpose what happened later in Detroit, when I went to the Detroit museum [Detroit Institute of Arts], to what I did when I was in that one year of high school. I had my first girlfriend in Detroit, who lived just up the street from us.

GARDNER: It sounds as though you adjusted very well. It's not easy to take someone in the early to mid-teens and transplant from an environment that they have known all along.

LEE: Well, I always read a lot. I did very well in school. I didn't do all that well in Detroit, at Cooley, I think partly because I had been moved from New York to Detroit. But also I think partly because I don't think I



sort of really zeroed in on what I was interested in. I was still trying do some stuff with science or engineering. But anyhow, all of a sudden-- We were just in Detroit for that year or year and a half. Father was promoted again, and they asked him to come to Washington [D.C.]. So we moved to Washington, and we got a very nice house out in Chevy Chase.



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GARDNER: We had just gotten you to Washington, to Chevy Chase.

LEE: So there we were, and, again, in I think a more expensive--still nothing extraordinary--environment. Father was working down in the Commerce Department. He was about second or third in command in the whole operation, which had become quite, quite big. It meant dealing with all these radio networks and so on.

I was in the district of Western High School. So I went to Western High School for one year. I graduated from Western High School. And there I began to really sort of get into things where I felt I was doing something I was terribly interested in. I continued to be interested in outdoor sports and fishing. I played more tennis. And I made the Western High School baseball team as a pitcher, and I made the Western High School basketball team, though I wasn't terribly good at either. I was never a starting player, always a substitute. But I had some wonderful teachers and courses on a much higher level and much more interesting subjects than I had ever had before. Western High School was quite extraordinary. This was 1933, '34. Washington was then a city of four



hundred thousand, and it was very attractive and just wonderful. And also Father was very keen on sports too. He was very happy that I was on the high school teams and so on.

First of all, they had a course in ancient history-- Greece and Rome. Then they had courses in drama and they had courses in history that included some art. It wasn't art history but it was more like--

GARDNER: Western civ[ilization], that kind of thing?

LEE: That kind of thing, but on a senior high school level. They had a drama teacher who-- I can't remember her name, but she was a powerhouse. Middle-aged, grizzled, grayed. But she really knew a lot and she could articulate it very well, in terms of historic theater and modern theater. I did very well. I got straight A's. Because they didn't recognize any grades from any other school, I graduated magna cum laude and was the second in the class. The valedictorian was--I remember her because I dated her--the daughter of a brigadier general or something like that. May Fielder. She wasn't a great beauty, but she was very intelligent and very quick and a very good wit. It was just, you know, a different kind of environment. I really liked it. There was a beautiful blond girl up the street named Virginia Kane, and Grandmother thought she was a little questionable. But I



dated her. And next door there was a rather attractive brunette, but very sort of proper and weak. Grandmother thought she was terrific, but I didn't. She kept trying to fob her off on me, but I kept dating Virginia Kane. I took her to the senior prom and so forth.

But Father didn't like Washington. Father was definitely not a society type, in the sense of being interested in moving up. He didn't like those people much. He was a good solid radio engineer, and that was what he wanted to do. And he didn't like Washington with all the frippery and foofaraw. So he asked to go back to Detroit, and they sent him back to Detroit. They made the area bigger, so he was in charge of the whole northern Middle West, including Chicago. The office was in Detroit.

At that time I had to choose a college. My family never had much money, I think in large part because of my mother's illness and my illness. Grandmother was, I think, a real trial to my father, because she was very straitlaced and she wanted things done just so. I think it was tough on him to have Grandmother around all the time. So we went back and we looked around at schools. I didn't like the idea of going to a big school. I wanted to go to a smaller place that was more-- I like a little degree of privacy; I didn't like a big place. So we



finally settled on Albion College, and I went there.

GARDNER: Where is that?

LEE: Albion, Michigan. And it was a disaster. The first time I'd been away a long time. I was pledged by Sigma Chi. It was a big fraternity college. I played on the fraternity basketball team--you couldn't go out for a team your freshman year. I remember a history professor who I thought was pretty useful and good, but I don't remember too much. But I remember it was really a kind of jock college. I just got off on the wrong foot. I was unsympathetic to them and they were unsympathetic to me. And what was more, I had been raised by Grandmother: I wasn't a jock type. I remember I went fishing; I went out squirrel shooting. There was one student there I knew and he liked hunting. But it was just a disaster. I just told my parents, "I gotta get out of here." And they didn't know what to do.

And then I remembered, or my grandmother remembered, that there were these scholarships at American University in Washington, D.C., one for each state. And they took care of tuition and so on, but not room and board, as I remember. So we applied posthaste, and we found that the scholarship for Michigan had not been awarded. So I got a scholarship, and I transferred mid first year down to American University. That worked out very well. I



graduated from American University. Now we get into areas where we're getting into more memory, and I don't know how much you want.

GARDNER: Well, in a sense, I'm interested in what interests you. At this point also, we're getting you closer to your career.

LEE: Yes, that's right. Do you want me to emphasize that part of it--which to me is the most significant part--that led to my career or--?

GARDNER: Well, if there are other things that come into play, we can talk about them as well.

LEE: Well, start off this way: I was starting, really, with a clean slate, because Albion had been so very unpleasant. I must have been very unpleasant as well. It was just total incompatibility. So, in a sense, it was a clean slate. I remember almost nothing of the courses that I took at Albion, except that I didn't like any part of it.

So I had decided that I was going to major in physics. My first semester there I took a course in physics from Dr. Rouse, who was a terribly nice man, very patient. I built a spectroscope and began working with spectroscopy just enough to get through. But in math, at the end of the freshman year, you hit permutations, combinations, and probability, which would be leading you



up to second-year math, which was calculus. Brother, I was totally at sea.

I was interested in the English literature course. The English literature course had a very good system, which, I don't know, I don't think it still applies, because I don't see any evidence of it. Your second semester in English, you were required to write a long paper with full scholarly paraphernalia. And your topic was assigned, you didn't pick it. I was assigned the problem of who was Vanessa in the life of Swift. I worked like a Trojan at the Library of Congress. I got the paper done, and I think I got a C+. But it was the most-- Because you had to do everything according to the book, note cards and the whole schmear. It was a real experience and very humbling. You realized how much went into this and how much you missed.

So I decided that I was going to major in history. I thought history-- I'd always been fascinated by it, I liked it. That second year, that was 1934-35, when [Robert Maynard] Hutchins went to [University of] Chicago. A lot of professors left, and some very good ones came to American University, partly because it was in Washington, D.C., and the Library of Congress was there and these professors could really work. They had Dr. Richard Bauer in history. He was a medieval historian. They had Dr.

Eugene [N.] Anderson in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century European history, French Revolution and other things. And later, when I was in graduate school doing my master's [degree], Dr. Turner, intellectual historian-- Ralph [E.] Turner, who later went to Yale [University] and was a full professor, a tenured professor there, and wrote some very good books. Anyhow, there was some real sort of intellectual stimulation there.

It was a school of four hundred students. I was one of the people who founded the tennis team. We had the first tennis team American University ever had. We played in the conference and we won. We were undefeated the first year and we were almost undefeated right down through for four years. We won the conference championship every year. I made the basketball team. I was a starter and I played basketball, not very well. Anyhow, it was exciting.

I took a course in medieval history. I took a course in the Renaissance. There was another professor who came, a young professor in English literature, Donald Weeks. I became a very good friend of his. There was real challenge going on. And I took a course in English lit[erature]. This was as a second-year course. I dropped math. I was doing well enough with the French I had--I did a little French. I was doing well enough so I



could handle it okay, but I was not terribly adept at language. So I began more and more to be interested in history. And then the third year, junior year, there was a course in art history.

You think today about art history, it's a big industry and so on. This was 1936, '37, and there was one teacher. His name was Will Hutchins, and he had a B.F.A. from Yale. He was a painter. The painter who had taught at Yale, I'm pretty sure, was Willard Metcalf, who was an American impressionist. Hutch[ins] painted in American impressionist style. He felt Cézanne was not all that great and he didn't much like Cézanne. And Picasso was something impossible. I took my first course in art history. Hutch had been an ambulance driver in World War I in Italy. He had brought back books and reproductions of Italian art. He spoke Italian quite well. He was not a trained art historian, not a systematic art historian. He was also the drama coach. And he was an old ham and quite wonderful. He and I went sketching, impressionist style, around the university, which was all open country, just beautiful open country, and also across the river in Virginia. I learned something about the impressionists' ideas and the ways of painting.

I took art history and I took Weeks's course in



modern poetry and in modern literature and I took more history. I took Anderson's course in intellectual history, in the French Revolution, and so on. I just felt that art history was terrific. It had a proper mix, to me, of intuitive aesthetic understanding and historical context and research and organization. I decided I really wanted to be an art historian. I decided in order to do that, I had to do two things: one was wait and get more history before I went into art history--so I would take my master's in history--and secondly, get some more painting under my belt. Not that I would be an artist, because I don't have the talent for it. But I felt it was very important if you're going to be a good art historian to know something firsthand about the artistic process and what happens and how it happens and how it affects what you do. And what's the difference between canvas and panel, and how does it affect what you do, and so forth. So I made a plan.

Well, end of my freshman year, I went on a blind date. I'd gone into a local fraternity at American University. I can't even remember the Greek letters now. Doesn't make any difference. I was asked to go on a blind date. It was rigged up by a gal named Phyllis Sloan, who was in Ruth's sorority. I met Ruth [Ward Lee] at the dance, at this blind date, and we hit it off right away.



And Phyllis was furious, because she was trying to-- So from that time on, that is for my sophomore and junior year--because Ruth was one year ahead of me--I was going steady with my future wife.

As I got, in my sophomore year, more and more into history and literature and culture, I joined the drama club. In my junior year I was in Two Gentlemen of Verona; I had one of the lead parts in that, Proteus. And I got more and more fed up-- I was living in the dormitory. I was living in a room with another guy, who was a football player named Joe Brittain. He was short and muscular and he came from a steelworking family in Pennsylvania and he was pretty coarse. There was too much noise and I wanted a place of my own. I told my parents they had to pay for a dormitory anyhow, and I could eat in the dining facilities, but I wanted a room off campus. So I looked around and I found a very nice house, not far, just two blocks from American University, and a very nice room. It was a colonial house, and nice people, an elderly couple. I had a room there. Then I could study and read and I could stay up if I wanted to, read if I wanted to. I was my own boss and I loved it. I was going steady with Ruth and everything was just fine.

Professor Weeks, Donald Weeks, had an apartment in a house somewhere some blocks away. There was a guy in my



class named Franklin Bartle who had terrible problems with asthma and was perhaps the most unathletic person who ever lived. He could barely walk down the sidewalk without falling over. Not because he was a cripple or anything, just because he was so poorly coordinated. But he was an absolute shark on classical music and a tyrant about it. His word was law. I mean, he was fantastic. There was a political science major named Lou Frank who was president of the class and on the debating team. He was a prelaw student, typical prelaw student. Bartle and Frank and Donald Weeks shared this big kind of apartment. I used to go over there and listen to classical music and listen to Bartle orate about the right way to listen to it, what to like and what not to like and that Haggin was the greatest music critic that ever lived, and so forth--B.H. [Bernard H.] Haggin, I guess it is. Donald was tutoring me in poetry.

Then, my senior year, I was given the part of Hamlet in the Shakespearean play. They had a modern play in the fall and a Shakespearean play in the spring, and I was to play Hamlet. I was making a real hash of it, turning it into a condition of delirium. Donald told me, he said, "Look, you've got to study this thing and you've got to do it and do it right, or you're going to be a disgrace." He was a little bit ahead of his time in the way he taught

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then goes on to discuss the various factors which have shaped the development of the United States, including the influence of the British, the Spanish, and the French. He also discusses the role of the American people in the creation of the nation. The paper concludes by stating that the study of the history of the United States is a task of great importance, and that it is one which should be undertaken by all who are interested in the future of the country.

drama. Hutchins loved histrionics, and he was the drama coach. But now all of a sudden it's a revenge play and it's got to be played in a very straightforward way. Particularly you've got to get the subtleties of the poetry into the thing and not turn it into a Barrymore, ranting performance. I saw Maurice Evans as Hamlet. I saw [Sir John] Gielgud's Hamlet, which I thought was marvelous. I really worked at it.

This group, plus Hutchins, my art teacher, were also very much interested in the visual arts. And the Phillips Gallery, I went there quite often. I was introduced to the avant-garde, because Donald and Bartle were both interested in what was then considered to be avant-garde music, Sibelius, Milhaud, Georges Auric, and others--and jazz. We went up to New York. I'd go to the galleries and look around. We'd go up, five or six of us, to New York. Ruth went up once with us. We would go to the galleries to see works by Paul Klee and Rouault and so forth. And the Phillips Gallery was a big stamping ground for us. The Corcoran [Gallery of Art] we used more as a base for looking at old masters, because they didn't have the National Gallery [of Art] yet and the old masters were not in good supply in Washington in those days. But nineteenth and twentieth-century painting was terrific at the Phillips Gallery.



Now, looking back on all this-- I was quite an innocent, and one of Father's principles was to watch out and protect me. Once when some guy tried to pick me up on the tennis court-- He was on the faculty of Cranbrook [Academy of Art], and Father, being much more streetwise than I was, could see what was going on and brushed that off very quickly. Looking back now, I could see that probably the majority of people in this group were homosexuals. Donald Weeks certainly was. I guess Bartle was, I don't know. But it was the group on campus that was really interested in the arts and really knew a lot about it and was constantly learning more. In the process of learning more, we grew increasingly impatient with Hutchins. Because he hated, just hated Picasso. So it was a tremendously sort of volatile learning experience, typical of the kind of thing that happened on a much bigger, higher scale in other places: New York, Berlin, you name it, Paris, and so on. But it certainly educated me and got me started.

GARDNER: Did they guide you towards works of art history as well?

LEE: Oh, yes.

GARDNER: Are there any you recall as standing out in your mind at that period? Writers or art historians?

LEE: [Bernard] Berenson, certainly, in the Italian field.



Roger Fry-- I was interested also in painting techniques and so on. At the Phillips Gallery, I paid attention to what they wrote in the labels and what Duncan Phillips wrote in his essays. But Roger Fry and Clive Bell in the modern field are the two really significant ones. I read under Hutch's tutelage in American art, particularly-- Well, Walter Pach was supposed to be more advanced in the modern movement, but especially Roger Fry and Clive Bell, and [Henri] Focillon in medieval. Oh, yes, Hutch liked work by a writer in Italian painting named Tancred Borenius, who I think is not considered very much today. But anyhow, I remember reading him. Then there was a book on Italian fresco painters, beginning with Giotto and ending with Michelangelo. I've forgotten who the author of that was. It was sort of typical undergraduate general art fare. Nothing like the kind of more specialized and intensive work on a higher level that was then characteristic in very few places but Harvard [University], Yale [University], and Princeton [University]. History of fine arts was just beginning, really, with the Germans coming over.

GARDNER: Were you aware of those at all?

LEE: Not really, no--a complete innocent in my junior year. So that's how that particular interest developed. I had no knowledge of oriental art at all, none

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
IN TWO VOLUMES
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN GREAT BRITAIN
AND OF THE COUNSELLOR AT LAW
IN MASSACHUSETTS
VOLUME II
PUBLISHED BY J. B. BENTLEY
AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIELD
IN THE CITY OF BOSTON
1822

whatsoever. But my family lived in Detroit. I was in Washington. When I went home, I went down to the Detroit Institute of Arts. I enjoyed very much the collection there. I went up to New York as often as I could--it was fairly easy to do in those days by train--and did some of the commercial galleries. I tried to do some of the smaller places, thinking I could find something to buy, but I didn't have any money. I remember, for example, seeing at Buchholtz Gallery a small Paul Klee watercolor for \$90, A Machine for the Examination of a Candidate for Doctor of Philosophy. It's now in the Museum of Modern Art. It was \$90, but I didn't have \$90. I remember Weyhe Gallery, the bookstore and gallery where Carl Schniewind was in charge. He was later the great print and drawing curator at the Art Institute of Chicago. There was a Rouault watercolor, Portrait of Mr. X, which was \$110, which is also now in the Museum of Modern Art. But I just didn't have that kind of money. And my parents were not interested. They didn't have that kind of money. But I really don't remember going to the Freer art gallery [Freer Gallery of Art] when I was an undergraduate. I may have gone-- I think I went to see the Peacock Room, because of Whistler. But I didn't register any of the oriental stuff.

GARDNER: Did you stop to think, at any of these points,



what the possibility of making a career in this would be? You were getting interested in art history, but the notion of career has not really entered this discussion yet, except at the time that you decided not to go to Brooklyn Tech.

LEE: I decided that I wanted to take my master's in history because I thought that was essential to go on in art history. I would say that my senior year--the end of my junior, beginning of my senior year--I was going to be an art historian. That's what I wanted to do.

GARDNER: And you knew that there was such a thing as an art historian and that you could be one.

LEE: Yes. Except what I thought was an art historian might have been moderately acceptable in 1937, '38, but certainly not today. People forget how little art history there was before World War I, even before World War II, and in the oriental field there was almost nothing.

People don't realize how little there was. As an example of that, in a recent College Art Journal, some professors did a lot of research and wrote an historiography of American art. I didn't know, but the first doctoral dissertation in American art in, I guess, the world was mine in 1941. Nobody studied American art in art history. But the reason I did that dissertation had nothing to do with that I was burning to do something in the field of



American art. It had to do with simple opportunity--or lack of it--because of the beginning of the war in 1939.

Of course in my history courses with Anderson from the University of Chicago and Bauer, University of Chicago-- They were constantly working with works of art, literature, music--Anderson in particular--as part of intellectual history at the time. So it was simply very heady and very stimulating. I thought it was terrific, and that's what I wanted to do. My father thought I was nuts. Mother thought it was okay. And Grandmother thought it was all right. But they really didn't know what art history was. They would go, "Art history. What?"

I forgot to mention, when I first decided that physics was not for me, and mathematics was certainly not for me, that I decided that I would go into prelaw. That's one of the reasons why I went into history. I took a course in constitutional law, which was a very good course, given by another one of these guys that came from Chicago. I can't remember his name. I did very well in it. And I even went that summer with my parents--that was the year after my sophomore year; that would be '37--to Michigan to see about possibly getting into law school there after finishing. And he said fine. And I really was interested in doing that. But when I hit this



cultural group and scene and got into it, that's what I wanted to do.

GARDNER: You've talked about the places and so on. Did you get to meet many of the people who were behind the art scene, in a sense, in Washington? Did you get to meet Duncan Phillips in those days, for example?

LEE: I'll tell you about that when we get to my master's program, and also in writing my doctoral dissertation, which was a critical survey of an American watercolor painting. I got to meet a lot of people. I mean, [John] Marin and Waldo Pierce and William Zorach and Alfred Stieglitz. I studied painting under Karl Knaths. Outside the academic curriculum, one of my best friends, my best student friend in college, was Sidney Zink, who was majoring in philosophy. We were both on the basketball team. Our junior year, the team had had a terrible reputation. I think the first year, they had always been losing. The first year I think our record was something like three won, fifteen lost, and the sophomore year it was slightly better. But the junior year we were just getting it turned around and we won. I think we won thirteen and lost twelve or won twelve and lost eleven. Sidney was the captain of the team and I was the center, because I was so tall for that time. And the coach, whose name was Young, Bill Young--awfully intense but a very



decent guy--brought this team along. Then for some reason or another he was out and we got a new coach, who had been a player a few years before, named [Stafford] Cassell. He had big ideas and he had a new system he wanted to use. The starters were basically seniors, and he decided that they were out. He just benched all the seniors and he got some new people and started this new system. That sort of pissed us off. We were really quite angry. And so we just quit, said forget it. So I didn't have to spend time with basketball; I could spend more time on culture and art and literature.

GARDNER: All this time you were dating your wife as well?

LEE: Oh, yes, sure. I resigned from the fraternity.

That caused a sensation--you just didn't do that. But it just seemed so childish and idiotic. Here were all these football players with all these big muscles. It was boring and it just took too much time from the things I was more interested in. So I resigned. My wife was so upset, because I had given her my fraternity pin, of course, and I said, "I've got to have it back. I'm through with this stuff." And she had to give back my fraternity pin. That was cruel. I quit the fraternity and I stayed on the tennis team. We had a great, great season senior year. In the meantime-- One person on the faculty I must mention, because he was a chemistry



professor--Dr. William B. Holton. He was professor of chemistry and he was also the coach of the tennis team. He was also an ardent trout fisherman. We used to go off every now and then, weekends, up to where the president's retreat is in Maryland. What's the name of it? Camp David?

GARDNER: Camp David.

LEE: Well, it wasn't any Camp David there then. That's a trout stream comes through there. That's the stream we went up to and went fishing on. We used to do very well, and it was a lot of fun fishing up there with him. In my first year, of course, I took chemistry, because I was on this big science thing, and I was no good at chemistry. The only reason I ever passed was because, one, he was the coach of the tennis team and I was a good tennis player. Two, he was a trout fisherman and we went trout fishing together. So I was glad to wash my hands of chemistry. But he was an interesting guy. So then I graduated magna cum laude.



TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

APRIL 7, 1992

GARDNER: We left off, I guess, where you're about at graduation. By this time I guess you had decided that you were going to pursue the master's in history.

LEE: Right. Well, I graduated. Ruth [Ward Lee] had not really met my parents in any full way, so we thought it would be a good idea to have her go up. So she went up for three weeks in the summer to their house in Detroit. And it was all right, we had a good time. About the last week, my mother [Adelia Baker Lee], who was sort of informal and impulsive, said, "Why don't you two get married now? What are you waiting for?" Well, we thought that was a fine idea, so we did. We got married September 3 [1938] before going back to school. We spent the summer after graduation, and she spent three weeks in Detroit with me. Then we went back to Washington [D.C.]. We got married there, in Washington, on September 3.

GARDNER: Was her family from the Washington area?

LEE: Yes. Well, Ruth's father [George B. Ward] was a naval architect and worked for the Navy Department. He had started his career building the Panama Canal back in 1912 or '13. Ruth was born in the Panama Canal Zone. Then he retired early and he purchased land in his wife

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY
JOSEPH NEALE
OF THE BOSTON BAR
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.
BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
J. NEALE, 1825.

The first settlement of the city of Boston was made by a small band of Englishmen, who, in the year 1630, sailed from England, and landed on the island of Nodd, now called the North End. They were accompanied by a large number of Indian natives, who had been converted to the Christian religion, and who were to remain with them, and to teach them the ways of civilization. The settlement was at first very small, and the inhabitants were very poor, but it soon began to grow, and in the year 1634, it was incorporated as a city, and the name of Boston was given to it. The city has since that time grown to be one of the largest and most important cities in the United States, and it has played a very important part in the history of the country.

[Inez Weaver Ward]'s town in western North Carolina, in Weaverville. She was a Weaver from Weaverville, which was just outside of Asheville. He worked there for a while, but it was Depression time. So he finally went back to the Navy Department and they moved to Washington. They were living in Washington and she went to American University as a-- What do you call a student that comes from the city and goes daily to the campus?

GARDNER: Commuter?

LEE: Yes, a commuter student. So we got married on September 3. My mother told my father [Emery H. Lee]-- When he expressed some horror at the idea--"What will we do?" she said, "Well, you're going to pay for his tuition and his board and room while he's taking his master's degree, aren't you?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Well, just pay him, and that will do it." Ruth said she had studied some library science. She majored in liberal arts, but she was going to take a job down at the main library, that white marble building down in Washington on New York Avenue, which is now in the middle of devastation land. Ruth said she was going to work, anyhow. We agreed that we could manage it if Father would pay what he was going to pay anyhow for me and Ruth worked in the library.

I'd only had one job in my life up until that time, and that was when I was at American University. American



University ended just before the Washington high school year ended, and began after their opening. I had graduated from Western High School, which was very close, and the principal of Western High School, who knew me because of my being a student there, asked me if I'd like part-time work trying to get some order into their bookstore at the beginning of the semester, when all the textbooks go out, and at the end when they all come in. I guess they had been having a lot of problems. I took over in charge of that store at the beginning and end of the school year. I did it two years. That's the only time I'd ever earned a nickel. I never delivered papers. I never did anything like that.

My parents, my father and grandmother [Carrie Johnston Baker], they all indulged me. I had a brother, my brother David [Lee], who was born about seven or eight years after I was born. And he was a football player at Cooley High School, where I had spent one year. He became an architect. He was the architect for the University of Louisville, until he retired recently. But he was practical and athletic and not interested much in literature and culture and music and so on. So we were not terribly, terribly close. Also the fact that I'd been away at school and so on at the time when he was growing up. But my father was very decent, and he didn't see why



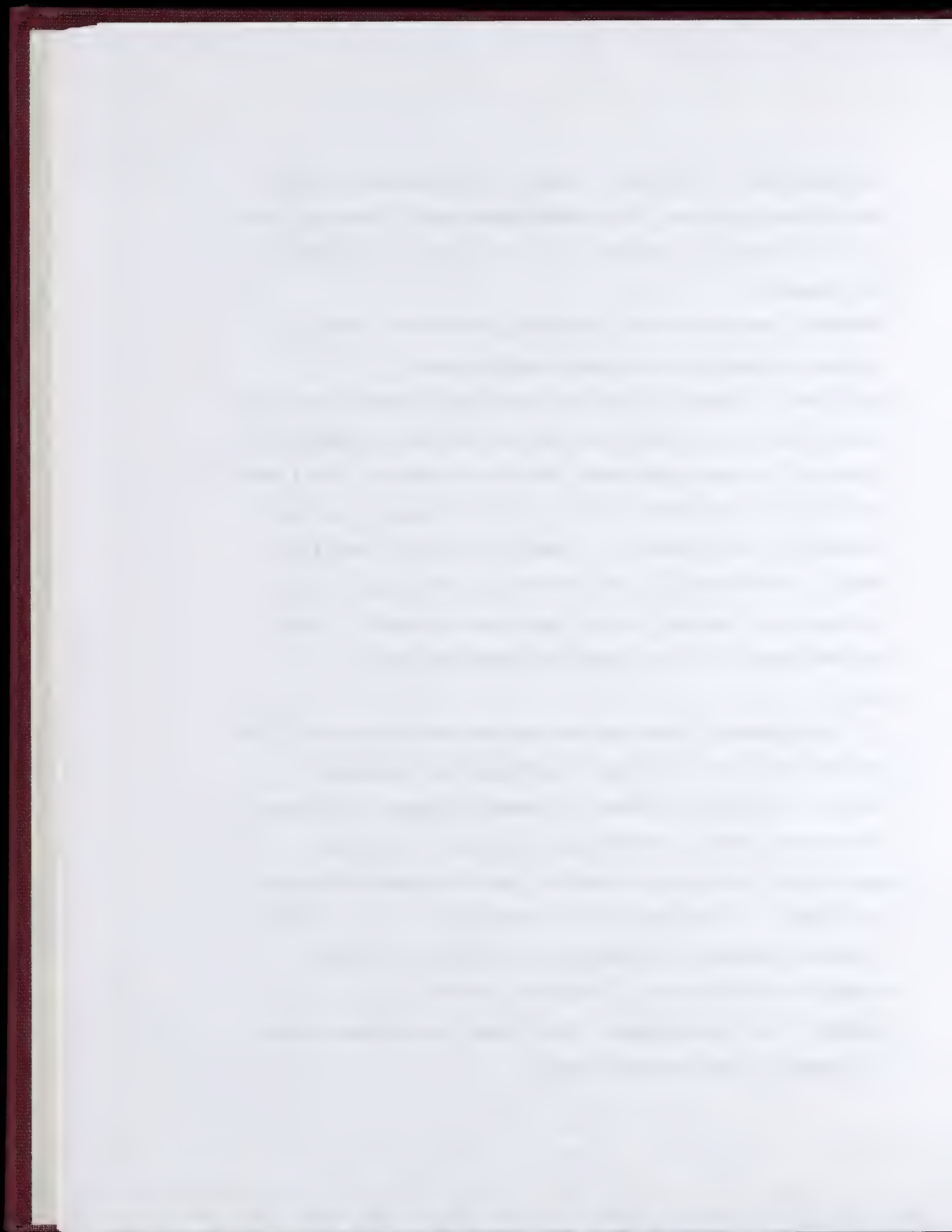
we should work. He didn't think it was necessarily good for children to work. His experiences hadn't been so that it was necessarily good for you. So I was privileged in that respect.

GARDNER: Then you could go camping and trout fishing instead of spending the summer pumping gas.

LEE: Yes. I didn't go to any fancy boys camps. The only camp I ever went to was when we were living in Brooklyn. I thought it would be a good idea to go camping, and I was sent to camp somewhere up in-- I think it was up in the Catskills. And I hated it. Once I got there, the first week, I just hated it. Grandmother insisted that I be indulged and removed; Father wanted me to tough it out. But she said, "No, the young boy must come home." So I did.

But anyhow, I had started earlier about marriage. We got married. We got a small apartment on Wisconsin Avenue. I started to take my master's program in history. At the same time I decided that I wanted to go study painting at the Phillips Gallery [now Phillips Collection] for a year. I thought that was important. I was thinking in terms, basically, of Western art. Now, I'm sorry I forgot to mention this. I need to go back.

GARDNER: No, that's okay. That's how the process works. Our memory is not always linear.



LEE: When Ruth came up to meet my parents and so forth, I had been taking-- Father paid for me--graduate courses at the University of Michigan summer session. I studied painting under Jean Paul Slusser, and I took a course in Italian Renaissance sculpture from Professor Donaldson, who was a Princeton [University] Ph.D., but then again, an old-fashioned art historian, not one of these terribly grim, probing intellects. I saw that there were two courses offered by Professor James Marshall Plumer. One was called Early Chinese Art, and the other one was called "The Life of the Buddha according to the Lalita-Vistara at Borobudur." Well, I was taking the sculpture course for credit, I was taking the painting course for credit, because I must have it. I decided I could take the Early Chinese Art course for credit, but that sort of filled me up. So I took the Lalita-Vistara course, Life of the Buddha, as an auditor.

Jim was deaf. He used a hearing aid. He sort of shuffled around. He had been in the Chinese customs. The Chinese customs, as you probably know, was manned by the British, Americans, Germans, and French, because nobody trusted the Chinese at that time. Well, that was the assumption anyhow. He was an inspector for customs at the port of Fukien Province, Foochow. He had gone back in the hills and had discovered a kiln site of the Sung dynasty



where the most famous tea bowls were made, called by the Japanese temmoku. He published an article in the Times illustrated supplement, or whatever that was called at that period. They used to have a publication on slick paper. Good illustrations but serious, and popular.

He gave a course, and he was not your sort of European-style art historian either. First of all, I think he had an A.B. I don't think he had an M.A. or Ph.D. And he had his A.B. from Harvard [University]. He had studied under Langdon Warner, who was the first one to teach oriental art at Harvard and who was also not your standard type of art historian. He didn't have a degree and they would not give him tenure at Harvard, though he was the most famous man in America in Chinese art and taught all the first-generation curators and professors in Chinese art. But they wouldn't do it because he didn't have his-- I think he had his master's but maybe not. Plumer was a pupil of Langdon Warner.

He gave lectures, but he also had his private collection of shards and saggers and pieces from the temmoku kilns. He had other things: bronzes, things that he collected from this and that. So we had a hands-on experience in the field of Chinese art. He loved doing things like this: We'd be learning about the different wares of the Sung dynasty, and he'd put a blanket in the



middle of the room. The students would have to get down, and underneath the blanket would be four or five pieces of Chinese Sung dynasty wares--different wares. You had to reach under and hold the ware, feel it and identify it. Well, you got to where you could almost be one hundred percent, if you were really interested and paid attention. But it's that kind of hands-on teaching that was informal and not one hundred percent academic that really worked.

Then the Life of the Buddha course-- Jim was one of the group of people--and this is very important--who were under the sway of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy. Have you heard of him? Ananda Coomaraswamy; a French so-called philosopher/writer called René Guénon; Jacques Maritain; and a man who wrote about Tibet named Marco Pallis--I still have his book. Coomaraswamy was sort of the linchpin in that group, and they advocated-- You know Joseph Campbell? Well, Campbell developed out of this thing. They advocated a kind of return to what Coomaraswamy called a medieval, or true, philosophy. They believed in a caste society. They believed in the superiority of oriental wisdom. They believed that Europe and Western civilizations had gone totally downhill since the end of the Middle Ages, etc. The syndrome is well established. Jim Plumer taught this class and he taught this kind of thing in his class, especially in the Life of



the Buddha class. Well, that made an impression on me. That's when I was first exposed to oriental art, and I was really interested.

So I went to my classes at the graduate school of American University. And they were not held on campus, they were downtown. They were very close to the old State Department. There too had been some [University of] Chicago castoffs. One of them was Ralph [E.] Turner, the intellectual historian. Brilliant guy, tough, very tough. And there was an anthropologist named Helen Ware, who had been a pupil of Ruth Benedict. So I signed up for the course in anthropology and I signed up for the intellectual history course from Ralph Turner.

Then I had to write my dissertation. And I chose a subject on the secular art and representation in medieval England, basically fourteenth-century England, which involved, especially, cathedral bosses and misericords. I was taking a course at the Phillips Gallery and I was doing one other thing. There was a history course which I took out at the main campus from Dr. [Richard] Bauer, who was a medieval historian.

GARDNER: Before you embarked on your graduate career, did you look into the possibility of going someplace that specialized in art history? Or were you not yet ready for that?



LEE: I'm trying to remember. I went either just before I went into the master's program-- I think it was the year after I went in, after I finished. It was when I finished my master's. Then I went to look at the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University], and I talked to Walter Cook. I went to Boston to talk to Coomaraswamy, who was the curator of Indian art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. And I went to the Freer [Gallery of Art] to talk to John Ellerton Lodge, who was the director of the Freer and had been the chief curator of oriental art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It was Henry [Cabot] Lodge that confronted Wilson in the United Nations, and John Ellerton Lodge was his brother I think--brother or cousin. Cook said, "You can get into the Institute of Fine Arts, that's fine. But you'll have to do something about German, because if you haven't had German you're going to have to do that before you can be admitted." And Coomaraswamy said that if I was interested ultimately in going into the oriental field, I would have to get languages. And Lodge said that "If you're going to do anything in Chinese art, you've got to get the language." So there it was. I knew French and I knew English. But we were married, and later on our first child [Katharine Lee] was born, in 1941. And that's another story that comes out later on.

GARDNER: I got you ahead of the story, so I'll get you

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
IN TWO VOLUMES
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN GREAT BRITAIN
AND OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD, 1787.
NEW-YORK: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, 1787.

back again to graduate to American University graduate school. Get back to the question I asked you a little earlier about Duncan Phillips and the Phillips Gallery. Can you tell me something about what that is all about?

LEE: Yes. That I can now talk about. I had the course in anthropology, the course in intellectual history, I had the dissertation, and I had the course in medieval history out on the campus. But they also gave me some credit for studying painting. It was a formal program at the Phillips Gallery. So that's how the mix worked. Before the Phillips Gallery, the painting I'd done had been with Will Hutchins. He taught me sort of the basic elementary American impressionist landscape technique. When I went to Phillips Gallery, it was interesting. The first day I went there, I went in-- The studios and the classrooms were upstairs on the third floor, and we went in and the teacher was Franklin Law Watkins, the head of the school. His assistant was Robert Gates, who was a very good painter, a young man in the Washington area. And we were all seated in the studio room, and there was a stand for the model. We were all seated around, and I was sitting there innocently looking up and listening to Watkins. Somebody came and sat down next to me, I could see out the corner of my eye. And she was wearing an unusual costume, which was a blue taffeta robe. And who was it? It was



Alice Applegate, who was a classmate of mine at American University. Or was she your classmate, dear?

RUTH LEE: [laughter] No, she was yours.

LEE: Yes, Alice Applegate. And she was the girlfriend of--

RUTH LEE: Beautiful, Victorian-looking girl.

LEE: She was a dancer. And wasn't she the girlfriend at that time of one of those big football players?

RUTH LEE: I don't know about that.

LEE: I'm pretty sure she was.

RUTH LEE: She wasn't in my crowd. I always admired her-- with her clothes on. [laughter]

LEE: And of course she was the model. She goes up there stark naked and takes a pose.

RUTH LEE: Sherman was a very sweet and innocent boy.

I've tried to give that impression, but it's true.

LEE: And she was the model. I wasn't prepared for this, so I was sort of all thumbs and fumbling and so forth for the first few days. But gradually I got used to it.

Anyhow, we went through-- We did direct painting, we studied glazing techniques, we studied tempera painting, we studied the model--some anatomy--we did still life. Then there was a six-week section where we studied under Karl Knaths. Have you ever heard of him? No? He's in all the books, you'll find him. He was German--came when



Hitler came in and came to America. He was a considerable painter and he has a reputation. He worked in a semi-abstract style that is still sort of postcubist with greater emphasis on synthetic cubist manipulation of planes in a restricted space than the deep, solid stuff of analytical cubism--and quite a good teacher. We studied for six weeks under him, and there were two projects in that six weeks.

At the end of that six weeks they had an exhibition of selected works, selected by the staff, down in the basement of the Phillips Gallery. Selected from work before Knaths or work we'd done during Knaths. And I got two pieces in the exhibition. One is in my study, which is an abstract painting, sort of à la Knaths. The project involved having angles all slanting from right to left not greater than forty degrees, and one had to do something with that. The other picture was a picture I had done when I was studying just the previous summer under Jean Paul Slusser up in Ann Arbor [Michigan]. It was a picture of the side of a rough and dilapidated brick building with two big billboards on it. One billboard was advertising gum and the other one was advertising gas. There was a third painting that was in the exposition, which was a picture in a rather muted tonal study of a factory on the outskirts of Ann Arbor with a big pile of coal and



steelwork and so on. Well, I had been interested in the art of Niles Spencer. Do you know him? And there was a Baltimore painter named--his son is now an art historian--Herman Maril. That's what I was interested in, and in the Gum and Gas picture I really sort of let go. There was lots of impasto, very direct painting and great simplification of the billboard picture representation. Fine. But lo and behold, the picture in Karl Knaths's manner got first prize, I think, for that particular exercise and Duncan Phillips bought the Gum and Gas picture. It's still in their collection.

GARDNER: How about that.

LEE: Yes. A few months ago, I got a letter from the curator, a new curator there, who is preparing a catalog and handbook for the Phillips Collection. She wrote and asked me-- They were collecting this material, and she sent me a Xerox of the page of the unofficial catalog where there is Gum and Gas. And she wanted to know the background and so forth. She didn't make the connection between my name and A History of Far Eastern Art [1964], though she had a copy of it, she used it. When I told her that's who I was, she was quite excited, very interested. I told her about Niles Spencer and Herman Maril and the background of that. But Duncan Phillips bought the picture. Of course, we were poor as church mice, and



anytime somebody would give us twenty-five or thirty dollars, we were very, very happy. They had a little sort of tea for the thing, and Duncan Phillips congratulated me and so forth and so on.

I never was part of the inner group there because I was living at home with my wife up on Wisconsin Avenue. I wasn't at all the events there. I was sort of an outsider, and so I didn't get to know him terribly well. Students were invited to a picnic out at the Phillips house and farm. Marjorie Phillips was of course a painter who studied under Bonnard and painted very much in the manner of Bonnard. I remember she was sort of very fey and very informal. Duncan, of course, was very-- He was very good and very staccato--I think he was basically a very shy person--with a red mustache and red hair. He was good, but I certainly did not get to know him. They set a lot of store by the Barnes Foundation things too--the Barnes approach. Of course [Albert C.] Barnes was an ogre. But Phillips's approach was basically Roger Fry, that kind of aesthetic. He had a terrific eye, and his wife was very good. It was a real education to be able to go in that place every day and live with those things all the time.

GARDNER: Were you tempted at all to take on the life of an artist?

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LEE: No. I may be dumb, but I'm not stupid. No. I did it, I enjoyed doing it, but I was frustrated because I knew I really didn't have that kind of talent.

GARDNER: Most artists would give at least one arm to get in the Phillips Collection. It's remarkable that you did it coincidentally.

LEE: It's an accident. It's an accident.

GARDNER: Did you get up to the Barnes Foundation at all during this time?

LEE: No. I'll tell you about the Barnes Foundation later on.

GARDNER: Okay. I'm sure once we discuss museums and so on.

LEE: But, see, in Washington at that time--this was now 1939, fall of '38, '39--they began to have art activities. And there was a gallery there, the Bignou Gallery. They opened a branch down in Washington. And I remember there was one picture they had of a still life with skulls on the table by Cézanne which is now in the Phillips Gallery. Duncan Phillips bought it out of that show. I think it was something like \$7,000. They had exhibitions at a building not far from where the Bignou Gallery was. They had a competition show with a lot of pictures without labels, American paintings. You were supposed to go through and identify who the artists were and so forth. I



think I missed one or two. Anyhow, I didn't win the grand prize, but I was mentioned as having completed a lot of them.

The master's thesis went along very well. Of course, this was '39. The war started in Europe. We didn't have any money. And the thesis was done basically from all the reproductions available in different books and so forth in the Library of Congress. I spent a lot of time there going through all the architectural publications and everything for bosses and misericords, very little secular sculpture anywhere else. I read a lot of Piers Plowman and a lot of historical and sociological studies of the British farming class in the Middle Ages. [William R.] Lethaby, a guy who wrote on medieval sculpture. Some of it is becoming very fuzzy with me. But the point is, in studying under Ware, the anthropologist, and [Ralph] Turner, the intellectual historian, and dealing with secular sculpture in the Middle Ages, I became, for the first time, exposed to an attitude towards art and history which was not a traditional one. It was one that was interested in ordinary people. It was not one which was interested in faith, but rather its opposite, because of the secular sculpture satire and semi-pornography, especially in the misericords.

My committee for acceptance or rejection of the



dissertation included my old professor that I had at the campus, Will Hutchins; Ralph Turner, the intellectual historian; and Dr. Bauer the medieval historian, from off the campus. Hutch was absolutely horrified by the dissertation, because Hutch was a good Episcopalian. He was the warden of the National Cathedral. He was very much involved in that. This was all blasphemy as far as he was concerned. I had to defend my dissertation, and there they sat, and Hutch with his blast. I said, "Oh, my God, this is going to be the pits." Then Ralph Turner spoke up, and he just laid into Hutch in some terrible way. I was embarrassed. And Bauer said, "Yes, that's right." So two to one they accepted the thesis. And that was it, it was done.

Then I went around, as I told you, to talk to different people about where to go next. Finally, I went to my professor friend, Donald Weeks, who opened my eyes to art, but also to literature. He was from Cleveland. His father was an architect. He was the architect, he and his firm--Walker and Weeks--for Severance Hall, which was a very distinguished building. Donald suggested-- I think he was very smart, for I know I was certainly not a sophisticated, well-trained, well-educated graduate student. If I had gone off to one of those bigger places, I think it certainly would have been a long, long, long



haul. And since I was also definitely interested in actual objects and things--I'm object oriented--he suggested that I might explore the possibility of going to Western Reserve University [now Case Western Reserve University] because of the [Cleveland] Museum [of Art]. There was a program at the university, and it was run by the art historian on the faculty, a man named Lamberton, again Princeton and very dry. Still, you could learn something from him, but he was not one of their distinguished graduates or Ph.D.'s. I think it was very good advice. Anyhow, we went up to Cleveland, and the head of the education department at the museum was Dr. Thomas Munro. It was a joint program, but it wasn't officially a joint program and it wasn't fully developed. But the head of the museum part of the program was Dr. Munro. Do you know who he is?

GARDNER: Yes.

LEE: He was a pupil of John Dewey and a Scotch rationalist like the eighteenth-century Scotch people, Hume and others. He had been at the Barnes Foundation as director of education there for several years and had written many books. His degree under Dewey was in philosophy and aesthetics within philosophy. He was very encouraging. Cleveland-- I thought the museum was marvelous. Of course the cultural situation in Cleveland



is a very positive one. The orchestra is terrific; we met a couple of teachers who were very interested in drama; and the Cleveland Play House had a big reputation. It all seemed very, very encouraging. I would have to get German. Okay, fine. So we thought about it and talked it over, and we decided we'd go there. We went up and we found an apartment, sort of an alley type of corridor apartment just a block and a half away from the museum, and started to go to work. Ruth was able to get a job at the library. She'd been working in the library in Washington, and she got a job working in the library in Cleveland. I taught children's classes on Saturdays in the morning. I think I was paid two or three dollars a week, which in those days--this is 1939, '40, '41--was ten dollars a month. It helped.

Tommy Munro's courses were basically all worked into his developing project for his big four-part work on aesthetic and art criticism. He lectured and there was not much discussion. He lectured and it was recorded, and his secretary would type it out. It was really the production of his major book. Tommy, some people thought, was not very profound. He was part of that Scotch rational tradition, pragmatic, rational tradition. He was a pupil of John Dewey's. But he had a wonderful gift for organization and a logic in proceeding, like a good



philosopher: one, two, and so forth and so on. And I learned a lot from him. He was interested in all forms of art. He had written the first book in English, along with Paul Guillaume, on African Negro sculpture [Primitive Negro Sculpture]. He had written a book on theories of art criticism. The magnum opus was what he was working on now. He used Persian rugs, he used classical art, Greek vases, Chinese art. The world was his oyster as far as art went and handled in a dispassionate, objective, logical way. Just what I needed. I really hand him a lot of credit for sort of getting people organized so they don't miss things. Because the organization-- You've got to have it here, in your head.

Lamberton gave courses-- He had majored in Italian Renaissance painting. I took several course from him. We met William [M.] Milliken, who was the director [of the Cleveland Museum of Art], and saw him occasionally. We met, Ruth and I, the curator of oriental art, Howard [C.] Hollis, who was a pupil of Langdon Warner's and who was a friend of Jim Plumer's. That was one of the reasons also that I thought Cleveland would be a good place to go. And we hit it off, professionally and in terms of social life, very well. He had this office up in the curatorial corridor. The collection then was very, very small. The Far East barely filled two and a half to three of the



smaller galleries. But he said, "Would you like to help in the oriental department?" I said, "Sure, I'd love to." And he said, "We can't pay anything." William Milliken said they couldn't pay anything. I guess they didn't have any money. I said, "That's all right. I should pay you." He got me work as a volunteer assistant in the department. He was then in the process of preparing something on one of the few subjects that I knew anything about.



TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

APRIL 7, 1992

GARDNER: Why don't you start again with the beginning of just this last class, just this last professor.

LEE: You mean Hollis?

GARDNER: Yes, Hollis.

LEE: Ruth and I met Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hollis, and he was the curator of oriental art at the museum. She [Helen Hollis] was a musician. She was a very good pianist. And we hit it off socially and Howard and I hit it off professionally. He asked me if I would like to serve as assistant in the department. He couldn't pay me; the director, William Milliken, said there was no money. I said that I would be happy to work on a voluntary basis and it would be valuable experience and so on. He was in the process of preparing a major exhibition, probably the largest exhibition held in America up until that time of Chinese ceramics. That was one thing that I did know something about because I had studied under Jim Plumer. He was a friend of Jim Plumer's and he was a pupil of Langdon Warner's. So that worked out very well. I was able in the process of that first year, when we had the Chinese ceramic exhibition, to really be of substantial help and use. I learned a lot, for the first time, about



the inner workings of the museum in a curatorial sense.

GARDNER: Did that interest you particularly?

LEE: Oh, yes. I was still basically art history oriented, but this was very, very exciting and very interesting. The exhibition was very successful. The museum bought, from the exhibition, a whole group of things. And Howard and I worked together. I had a part in working to decide what to select. He was very, very generous and understanding and very helpful.

To set the stage: Now, there was also in Cleveland the curator of paintings, Henry Sayles Francis, very nice man, a Harvard student with an A.B. I don't think he had a master's degree, and he was basically dominated by the director, William M. Milliken. Milliken was Princeton and had studied under [Charles Rufus] Morey and others. He was a medievalist basically, but he was a generalist. His particular area of interest was decorative arts, and medieval art was one of his strongest points. As I said, he dominated the painting curator and the painting department was weaker than it should have been. The curator of textiles was Gertrude Underhill, a nice old New England lady but not a scholar, not serious. There was a very good curator for classical and Egyptian art, Sylvia Wunderlich, German, well trained. She was the editor for



The Bulletin [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] also, the bulletin of the museum. The senior person under Dr. Munro in the educational department was Milton Fox. Milton was a dynamo. He was a painter, quite good. He had studied enough that he knew about art history and knew art criticism very well. Very keen mind and very, very good influence. He did not teach any courses. I got credit for a voluntary assistantship. I got credit in my hours-of-credit program. I took, as I said, courses in Italian painting from Lamberton. But basically the main course load was Tommy Munro.

The problem that developed in terms of my own development-- Howard Hollis, who was a New England Hollis and who had-- I think his parents were quite well-off, but they had lost something or he had lost something. He was not all that well-off. But he was accustomed to being well-off and he loved society, Cleveland upper, wealthy society, as did his wife, who was most beautiful, tall, big blue eyes. She was marvelous. But Howard had one terrible flaw, which was that he had swallowed hook, line, and sinker this Coomaraswamy medieval thing. He was reactionary in his attitude towards all social problems, quoting from Coomaraswamy and René Guénon constantly. And since Henry Francis and William Milliken and Tommy Munro



were liberals, that kind of isolated him.

GARDNER: This gives me a good opportunity to bring up something. We're both running out of voice I think, so we will need to stop soon. What about your own politics?

That's something that we didn't talk about all along the way. Did you grow up with any kind of political view?

LEE: My family was Republican. They thought Al [Alfred E.] Smith was a menace. They thought [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was a traitor, etc. Grandmother [Carrie Johnston Baker] was a very conservative Republican. My mother [Adelia Baker Lee] was apolitical; she just was not there for politics. I was under their sway. I really didn't think anything other than their political way of thinking until I was midway through college.

But with this new group of people I opened my eyes to the world of art and culture. They also were more liberal, very liberal politically, and they certainly moved me somewhere from right to left of center. But a couple of them were ardent communists and so forth, and that did not appeal to me at all. I never have been interested in that kind of solution to social justice. Munro, as I said, was liberal. Howard was a big influence on me because he opened my eyes to museum work, he let me in on the inside, he was very kind and helpful. He was



able to get some money for the museum occasionally so we could make a trip to New York and go visit the dealers. So I met a lot of the dealers very early on. But his political outlook really rubbed off heavily on me.

It was very, very difficult, because on the one hand you had Milton Fox--dynamic and very, very left. On the other hand you had Howard Hollis, who was very right. And it got to be difficult. We're now hitting the beginning of the war and so forth. The German consul in Cleveland was a man named von Heyden, I think it was. He was a part of the Hollis social arena and was often a guest at their parties. It got to be very funny because Howard would tell me, "Now, you've got to be very careful, because if you're too friendly with Milton Fox, you're going to get into big trouble because he's so far left." And then Milton would come up to me and say, "You've got to be really careful with Howard, because he's really so far right and that's very bad." So I was caught in the middle.

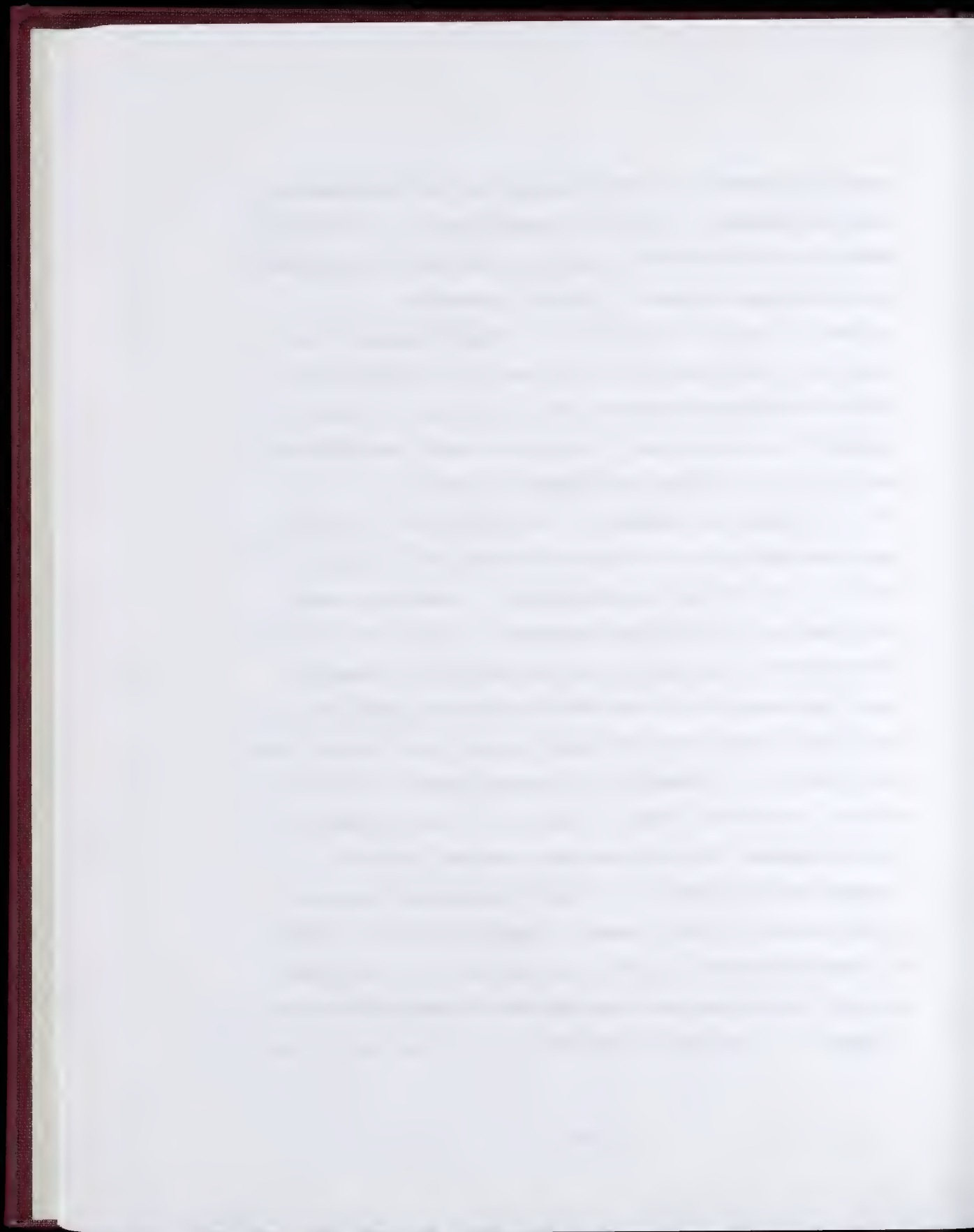
There is a certain seduction in the Coomaraswamy medieval approach that you find also in Jacques Maritain--the kind of thing that produced a sort of neo-Thomism. It has the answers and it's very subtle and the talk is very logical if you don't question certain premises. It



certainly affected me, and I became sort of like Campbell, like Joe Campbell. This all changed later on. One thing, Tommy's courses provided a good antidote and I think kept things balanced somewhat. And so it went on.

GARDNER: Since you wound up with Joseph Campbell, that takes us inferentially into the area of religion as well. Politics and religion are the two things you're never supposed to discuss, and I'll ask you about religion next. What sort of religious upbringing did you have?

LEE: My family was Methodist. My father had, I think, some ties early on to a typical New England Christian Science. Grandmother was Methodist. I was never very convinced by any religious doctrine. I would say I was a conservative, a-religious type up until I got somewhat under the sway of this medieval neo-Thomist point of view. The kind of thing that [William] Buckley did. That's very much part of it. Campbell is the more mystic side of it; Buckley is the more Thomist side of it. And incidently, in the oriental field it was very dominant, because Langdon Warner believed in it and Coomaraswamy was the chief curator of the movement. There are a lot of people in Japan--[Daisetsu] Suzuki, the Zen man--who were right in with the militarists, the medieval-loving militarists in Japan. It was not a crazy thing to follow, but it was



definitely something in the air. And of course the activities of the Nazis and the breaking out of the war put it into real focus. I never had any interest in the political or social side of it. I was interested in the attitude towards art, and it has a very consistent, believable, and useful philosophy of art. It may not be right--nothing perhaps is right--but it's not wrong. And one can learn a lot from it. I read quite a bit of these different people. You got it in Aldous Huxley, you got it in Marco Pallis, and so on. Traditional society. It made a pattern of culture and living that seemed superior to the one that we were living in. On the other hand, the anthropologist Dr. Ware had taught me quite differently, and so had Turner. So I was uncertain but leaning to this sort of romantic medievalism.



TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

APRIL 8, 1992

GARDNER: We were talking about your graduate school experience at Cleveland when you left off.

LEE: At Western Reserve [University (now Case Western Reserve University)], right.

GARDNER: I thought we could pick up there. And I suggested off tape that we begin with your dissertation, but if there is something else you would like to talk about--

LEE: No, I think that-- See, I entered the Western Reserve graduate school in the fall of 1939. Is that correct? No, that's not correct.

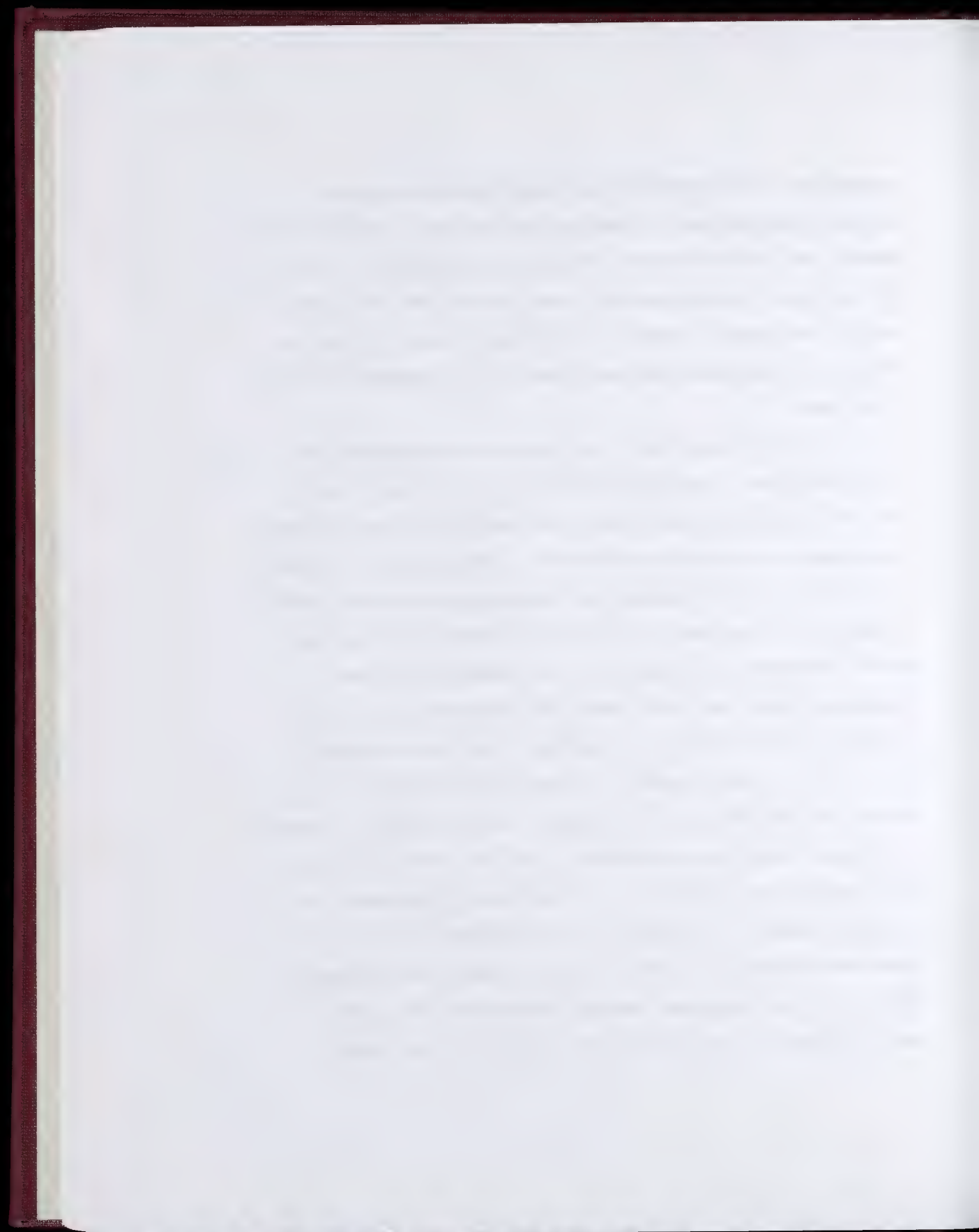
GARDNER: Yes, it should be, shouldn't it?

LEE: I graduated in May of '38. I entered Western Reserve in the fall of '39. As you all know, Mr. Hitler started his operation in '39. I had several conferences with Dr. [Thomas] Munro about what could be done about a dissertation. At that time, before World War II, graduate school was a serious business of course, but it had not yet developed into the kind of high tech factory that it developed into in the sixties and seventies. Except for Harvard [University], Yale [University], Princeton [University], the Institute of Fine Arts [New York



University], and probably [University of California] Berkeley and perhaps [University of] Chicago, there really weren't any major graduate schools in art history. And the number of people even in those places was relatively small. The idea of taking an enormous length of time to obtain your doctorate was not nearly as widespread then as it is now.

So Tommy [Munro] and I had several conferences, and we decided that, particularly since my wife [Ruth Ward Lee] was working herself very hard, working going all over Cleveland as a substitute librarian, and you know it just isn't fair-- So we decided that the thing to do was to try to get the thing over with in the shortest possible time and to concentrate on American art, because that was something where one could deal with originals here. You couldn't get to Europe, you couldn't get to the Orient, and so on. So we zeroed in on what could be done. I frankly am not the type of student that is going to become a profound, meticulous scholar. I'm much more interested in a broad view, overview. I'm much more interested in original works of art than I am in documents, and I had some experience in painting. I had always been a great admirer of the Phillips Gallery, where one saw a great many of them. I met there, for the first time, John



Marin, and Winslow Homer appealed to me enormously. He was an extraordinary watercolorist. And of course he was very much the hunting, fishing type. Nothing much had been done with American watercolor painting at that time. Very little. There were no works on it. There were no books on it. There were some articles, but it really hadn't been looked at. So we decided that I would try to do a critical survey of American watercolor painting.

I was able to get a Raney Fellowship at the university, which gave me some money for travel. And so we started out in the summer of 1940 on a big tour through all of the northeast to the various libraries and museums and historical societies, and also some of the artists, such as John Marin up in Maine and William Zorach, who was a sculptor but a great watercolorist who was at Boothbay Harbor, and Waldo Pierce, who was nearby. And we went to a lot of those small historical societies, rummaging around for watercolor paintings. We found quite a bit. This was totally unexplored ground, really. And a lot of material came to light, and a lot of it I didn't get. We of course did Chicago, and we also did New England and New York and that whole area quite thoroughly. We went to Winslow Homer's place at Prouts Neck and we saw the private collections up in Massachusetts, Q. A. Shaw-McKean



and the descendants of Homer up in the Prouts Neck area. And we visited Marin in his new place out above Mount Desert Island, a small island beyond there. Material piled up and I got quite a bit of new material.

I went to all the dealers in New York who had significant watercolorists on their rosters, like [Alfred] Stieglitz. That's where I had met Stieglitz once before, but I went there maybe the better part of a week working through the stuff he had. He had a lot of Demuth, which I was very interested in-- Charles Demuth. Stieglitz was an extraordinary character, and he was then not terribly well. He was at his gallery, an American Place, up in an office building down on Park [Avenue] or Madison Avenue about Fifty-sixth Street, something like that. He had a cot in a room at the side of the gallery. That's where he spent most of the day. He'd be lying down, and someone would come in and he'd get up and talk to them. He talked to me quite a bit and encouraged me. He was quite testy, but still he was interested that I was working on watercolor painting. He thought it was a good idea.

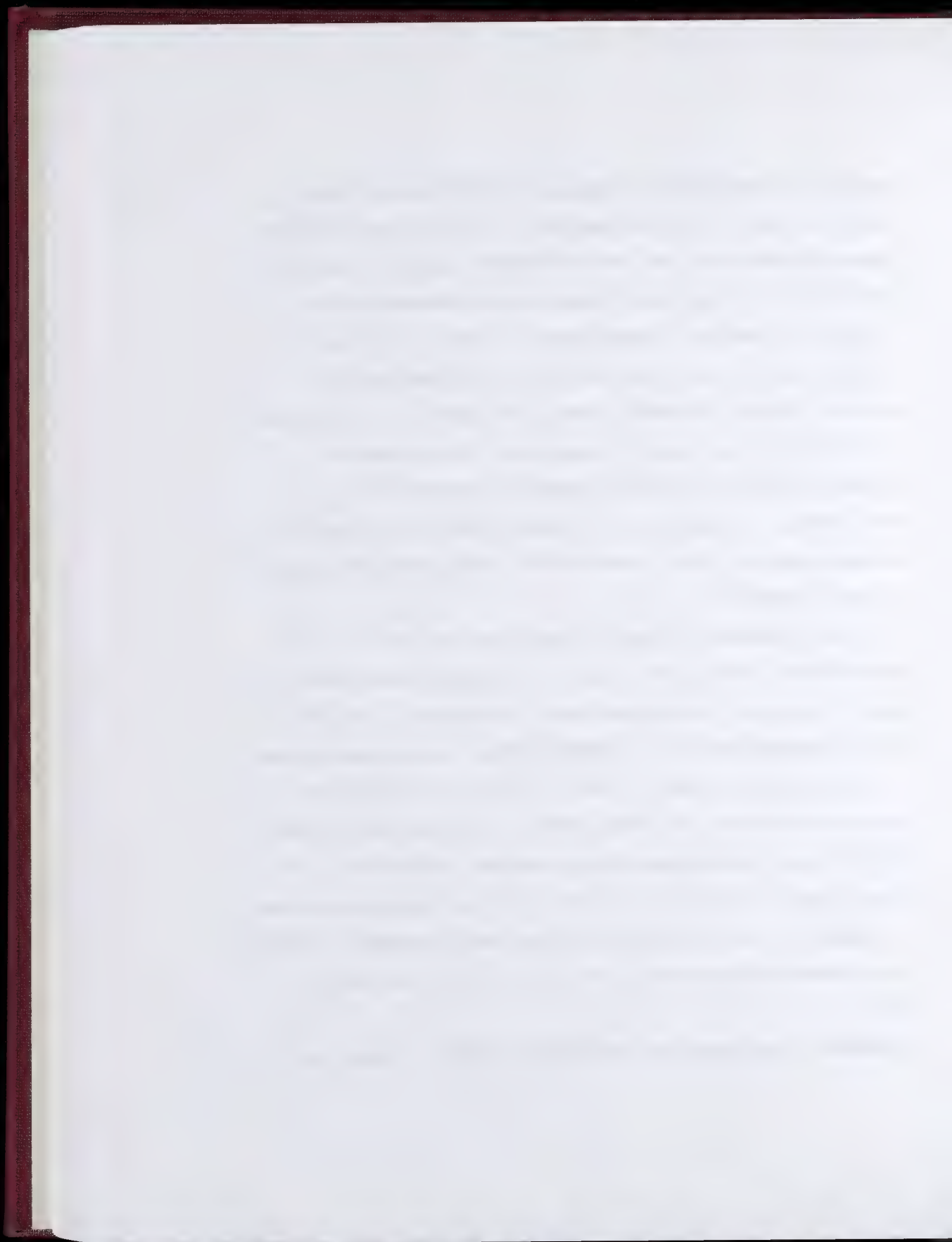
We did the New York Historical Society very thoroughly because of the Audubon material there-- watercolors which were extraordinary. Not much had been done with them, because everybody was concentrating on the



prints for The Birds of America. Philadelphia, where there was quite a bit of Demuth-- I couldn't get into the Barnes Foundation. Dr. Munro had been Barnes's curator of education, but that didn't make any difference to Dr. [Albert C.] Barnes. Tommy wrote a letter for me and I wrote a letter, and I got sort of a form letter back saying, "Sorry, you can't come." Basically, he had a ban on all people who were in academia. If you were a graduate student, it didn't make a difference what you were doing, you just weren't human. So I didn't get any Barnes material, but I was able to study some photographs of that material.

So I started writing in the winter of '40-'41 and wrote it at home in the kitchen, on the kitchen table. I don't type and I never have and I never will. So I'd write everything out in longhand; then my wife would type it up as a first draft. Then I'd get it to the typist, and she'd produce the final draft. I worked right along at it, every evening and every weekend, and finally got it done. And I was able to qualify and the dissertation was accepted. I had finished my course work, passed my French and German examinations, and I got my Ph.D. in May of 1941.

GARDNER: Was there any discernible impact on what you



did, since the field was so small and producing so few Ph.D.'s?

LEE: I'll get to that in just a minute. It's very interesting. Ph.D., May of '41-- In the meantime my wife was pregnant--early stages--and we had our first child [Katharine Lee], as a matter of fact, in the fall of 1941, after I had gotten my degree. William [M.] Milliken, the director of the museum, was a great pal of the people at the old Whitney Museum [of American Art]. It was directed by Juliana Force, and I had been down there, of course, and worked with their material during that summer preceding. But William mentioned to Juliana Force that they had this graduate student who was writing his dissertation on American watercolor painting, and had finished it. As a matter of fact, I did an article just sort of summarizing the thesis for Dr. Munro for one of his publications, a journal, which he asked me to submit to. William introduced me to Juliana Force up in the galleries of the museum. We sat down and talked. I said I thought that it would make a very good exhibition. There had never been an exhibition of American watercolor painting, and it could be a real contribution and would make the material I did the dissertation on more available to the general public. She agreed that it was a very good



idea, and she asked to borrow the dissertation over the summer. I said okay. I let her have a copy. And so, towards the end of summer, she sent it back with a letter saying she had studied it carefully and it was very interesting but that she didn't think it was something that they would do. It was two years later that they had an exhibition of American watercolor painting at the Whitney, with a small catalog and text by Lloyd Goodrich, which included some things he had to have gotten out of my dissertation. Well, that's life.

GARDNER: Transcriber should note that Dr. Lee shrugged his shoulders. [laughter]

LEE: That's life. There were other things to worry about. One thing I must add about my stay at graduate school at Cleveland: Dr. Munro [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] had certainly the best educational department of any museum in the United States. He also had a Carnegie grant, which he'd had for some time, for study of children's art education and children's art. And he had two psychiatrists on his staff who were working on this project. One was a Dr. Barnhart. I can't remember where he was from. And the other was Dr. [Betty] Lark-Horovitz. She was German. We usually had lunch together. We also had meetings with them in connection with teaching



children--I taught children's classes on Saturday mornings--and I learned a lot about children's art education and also a lot about psychology of art. It was a very useful and very interesting experience. And working in that project, Tommy would ask me to come to meetings and so on. I really learned a lot about that.

Along about February, I guess it was, before the dissertation was actually completed and the degree was granted, Ruth was pregnant. I needed-- We needed a job. Howard [C.] Hollis had gone to William Milliken and asked-- Because he was alone in the oriental department and we had done all that work together on the Chinese ceramics exhibition and I'd helped him in some research with Indian material, he asked William Milliken if they might find a place for me, at a low salary, as an assistant in the oriental department. And William said that he would love to do it, but he said no, he just didn't have the money. A week later he announced the appointment of a fellow named Cheney-- Tim [Timothy] Cheney, who was the son of the Cheney silk family in Connecticut--as an assistant in his department. I was learning fast, I was learning fast.

GARDNER: How the game was played.

LEE: So I had been scrounging around. I got a letter



from the University of Maryland, in response-- They had an ad in the placement thing, and I'd sent my curriculum vitae in and so on. They said they would hire me at \$1,600 per year, which was standard beginning instructor's pay in the university. They would hire me! We were very elated. Just wonderful! We finally saw that we might have a roof over our heads. And about ten days later I got a letter saying, oh, so sorry, but the state legislature, in their wisdom, had struck that position off of the university budget. So there we were with no prospects, I think, at all.

I'd applied for an advertised position at the University of Texas at Austin, and I got a letter from them saying they were interested and that they would pay my expenses to go down to Austin for an interview. At the same time, just about the same time-- I had been rather friendly with a graduate student from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, who was studying for his doctorate. He was from Cleveland and he was working in the Cleveland Museum library--Charles Cutler, who became a specialist in Flemish painting. I think the last I heard of him he was at the University of Iowa. And he was looking for a job, too. I was on the elevator with him, going up to the gallery, and he said, "Have you heard



about this position up in Detroit?" I said, "No. Which one?" He said that the Detroit Institute of Arts was advertising a position of assistant curator, and it was a civil service position, so there was going to be an examination. He gave me a copy of the thing. I had to copy down the essentials. And I applied and was told that I could come and take the examination.

But before the examination, I went down to Texas. That was a very interesting little jaunt, because I had never been down there before and went down on the Missouri, Kansas, and Topeka Railroad--the "Katie." And for breakfast in the morning, they had real corn bread and grits and so on. It was really something, something you read about in literature of the early twentieth century. But there it was, in 1941. So I went down to Austin, and I knew one person there, Gibson Danes, who was head of the department. I'd met him. And then there was a sculptor there who was from Cleveland, Bill [William M.] McVey. They interviewed me, and they were particularly interested in my qualifications for American art and wanted me to teach American art, but they said I could teach a course in oriental art if I wanted to. And they offered me the job at \$1,800. So I said, "I'll let you know in a very short time." I went back and went up to Detroit, to the



examination up there. Now, these were hard times, especially for people studying art history, and they had about forty to fifty students there from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Institute of Fine Arts, Chicago, all up there to take this examination. The position paid \$2,650 per year.

GARDNER: A princely sum.

LEE: I took the examination and went back and very quickly got a note saying that I had come in second in the examination. That meant that, I think, the first three people-- The second and third are put on a standby list. Then I found out that the man who had placed number one was, oddly enough, John S. Newberry Jr. of the wealthy Detroit family, who had been working on a sort of volunteer basis at the art institute [Detroit Institute of Arts] in the print and drawing department. He had come in first. The next week I got another letter saying that Mr. Newberry had been called up because he was in the naval reserve, because we were using all those patrolling boats and convoys, although we were not in the war yet. He said he would not be able to take the job, and I had it as assistant curator. So we danced a couple of times around the table. I called Texas and told them that I was terribly sorry but I had another position that I thought



was much more attractive to me and I would decline. And that's how I went into the museum field. Really, a coincidence.

GARDNER: Or a series of them.

LEE: Or a series of coincidences.

GARDNER: Let me ask you a couple of questions that occurred to me while you were describing this. First of all, the jobs at Maryland and Texas, were they in the art departments? There were not departments of art history at that point.

LEE: They were in the art department. But you were called an art historian--professor or instructor in art history.

GARDNER: You talked about Munro having worked for Barnes. In the time that you spent working on the dissertation, was any of the Barnesian method passed on to you? And if so, what?

LEE: Well, Barnes got some of his method from, of course, [John] Dewey. But I think he got some of it also from Tommy. There are certain elements, such as the analysis of what they call components of line, texture, color tone, hue tone, construction, simple repetition, variation, and contrast. That kind of logical, old Scotch, rational approach, to a certain extent, is in Barnes too. Barnes



added to it, added to Tommy's ideas I think, some things that Tommy didn't at all care for involving evaluating concepts about tension and so on, which are there, but they can't be pinned down the way Tommy liked them to be pinned down. Tommy occasionally talked to me about Barnes and said he was a terribly difficult person, etc., etc. He said he was not surprised that I couldn't get in despite his letter, although he was a little bit miffed about it. But I would say that Tommy used Barnes's books, especially the book The Art of Painting, but then also the book on Renoir [The Painting of Renoir]. He was very much influenced by Spencer: One sort of mode developed from simplicity to complexity. The more complex things, they were somehow on a higher level than those things that were simple. So, for example, he thought of all the impressionist and postimpressionist painters, and indeed in many ways all painters-- That Renoir was the greatest master because he was the most complex. He did more with color and texture than did the others. He thought, for example, that one of the greatest musical compositions was Ravel's La Valse, because in that you have the most complex kind of orchestration in all the work up until that time. So that's rather foreign to Barnes's concept, though Barnes did think that Renoir was the best of all



the late nineteenth-century painters. There were ties, but there was no systematic following of Barnes on Munro's part.

GARDNER: So no inculcation of the method into you as a pupil?

LEE: No, no.

GARDNER: Well, what about Milliken? We'll talk more about him later when we arrive at the job that you did get. What were your impressions of him in those days?

LEE: Well, I was just a graduate student, and I was very, very far down on the totem pole. I didn't see William in direct, personal contact very much. William had a private dining room across the hall. The male curators--Henry Francis, Howard Hollis, Dr. Munro, Milton Fox, William Milliken, Richard Godfrey, the photographer (before that there was another photographer, whose name escapes me)--were always there. And the comptroller, Mr. [Walter A.] Croley, regularly had lunch there. I was invited in with Howard fairly often when there was an extra seat. Some of the people from the art institute [Cleveland Institute of Art], which was nearby, [would also lunch there]. Notably, Henry Keller, who was a great watercolorist, incidentally, and probably the dean of Cleveland painters; Paul Travis, who was an important painter in the region;



Bill McVey, who had come up to the art institute from Texas, was there quite often. Dr. [Leopold] Levis, who was a Jewish German refugee art historian, who incidentally taught me German, got me so that I could get through the examination okay, and a very amusing guy. He was also working in the education department on the Carnegie grant thing. Dr. Barnhart and occasionally Lark-Horovitz, the German psychologist--she was the only woman I remember being there.

Tommy Munro hated lunch there because, though William Milliken was a great museum director--he had a very good eye; he'd built a wonderful medieval collection--he could be a very, very, I think, unpleasant person. If I was a grandma's boy--brought up as a grandma's boy--William was a mother's boy. He lived with his mother across the Wade Park pond in the hotel across there, the Wade Park Manor, with his mother. And she lived to be quite, quite old. I think she was still alive when I was there as a graduate student. The lunch thing was sort of William sitting at the head of the table and dominating everything and Tommy sort of eating away morosely. Milton Fox occasionally tried to get a word in edgewise. And the photographer was the butt of William Milliken's remarks; he was the fall guy in the group. It got to be just a routine that went



on and on, and people got terribly bored with it. But when Henry Keller was there--and Henry Keller had a wicked sense of humor--he would get William all stirred up and lead him on into something that was slightly very much off-color. All of a sudden William would realize what was happening. William was very straitlaced about any kind of dirty jokes or anything like that. Every now and then Barnhart, the psychiatrist, would make a joke and everybody would start laughing at it. And William would finally get it and he'd turn quite red. He would push back his seat and throw down his napkin and rush out of the room. It was just extraordinary. And when this happened, Tommy Munro would try to hold his laughter in and his lips together, and his face puffed out and turned almost purple until William finally jumped up to leave the room and Tommy would explode into laughter. It was a very, very sad scene.

He was a very difficult, very emotional man. He had his favorites, and he was very much criticized in Cleveland because he played favorites in the local painters. He was a pal of Clarence Carter's. He ran the May Show, which was the local regional show. He always invited hack jurors who were amenable to him. Also, they were amenable to his directions and what was to be done.



He even went so far, on several occasions-- We know definitely because we saw it. The jury had rejected somebody from the show, and after they'd go, he'd put them back in. He ran that show as his thing, though it was presumably a jury exhibition. But he also was very-- He played favorites among the dealers. He had certain dealers that he would work with and buy from. There were some dealers he wouldn't see. He would never go to Wildenstein [and Company]. And whatever you may think about that firm--some people didn't like Georges Wildenstein--they had super, super paintings and so on.

I was learning while I was there, because when I went to New York I also made appointments to go to Duveen [Brothers] and to go to Knoedler's and so on. I got to know some European dealers and the American dealers, like Betty Parsons and Marian Willard and the old boy at Babcock Gallery--I can't remember his name--and MacBeth at the MacBeth Gallery, who handled Winslow Homer's watercolors. So I knew a lot of those people. But I didn't know anything about Europe. I had never been to Europe; there was no way to go.

But I would say that William was a very fine museum director. Did you read that essay about William in there [in the museum's seventy-fifth anniversary publication]?



That's a very objective report by a very good and intelligent scholar, Henry Hawley. He didn't know William that much personally, as I did, but he did a lot of work in the archives and he dug out what he did there. I think that we agreed he was an excellent museum director. He built a wonderful collection for Cleveland while he was there. As a matter of fact, he put it on the map right after he became the director by buying the twelve pieces from the Guelph treasure. That definitely was the thing that put Cleveland on the map for the first time. He accomplished a great deal, but he was not, in my opinion, an admirable person.

This comes later, but when we were building the 1958 wing addition, I was curator of oriental art. They made me assistant director when they started the work, so I was supposed to help William with the supervision of the architecture, working with the architects and so on. There was some question about where the new wing was going to be in relation to the 1916 building. It was a crucial matter of how much projection there was on the west wing in relation to the old building. There's a glass connection. Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], who was the principal donor who gave the money for the new wing, was very concerned about that. The architect was [J.] Byers



Hayes, very straightforward. A little difficult, somewhat irascible, but very honest and straightforward. The trustees had asked William to have the architect put out stakes to show exactly where everything was going to be. The day came, and William went out early in the morning, before eight o'clock, and saw where the stakes were and moved them back because he thought that Leonard and Harold [T.] Clark would be very upset the way it was, and I think they would have been, too. But Byers Hayes, the architect, just said, "I can't have this. These stakes aren't in the right place." And a lot of uproar.

So they made me associate director, with full responsibility for the liaison between the trustees and the contractors for the finishing of the building. Of course William hated that very much. It was a terrible time, I must say--very hard work. William was very peremptory about it. He wanted what he wanted when he wanted it. If I was working on something and he wanted something, I would have to leave it. Things got rather strained. He blew up in front of my wife in the garden court of the museum because I was three minutes late or something like that for an appointment. Anyhow, it was not going well. When we finally got the damn thing finished and the collections installed, I came down with

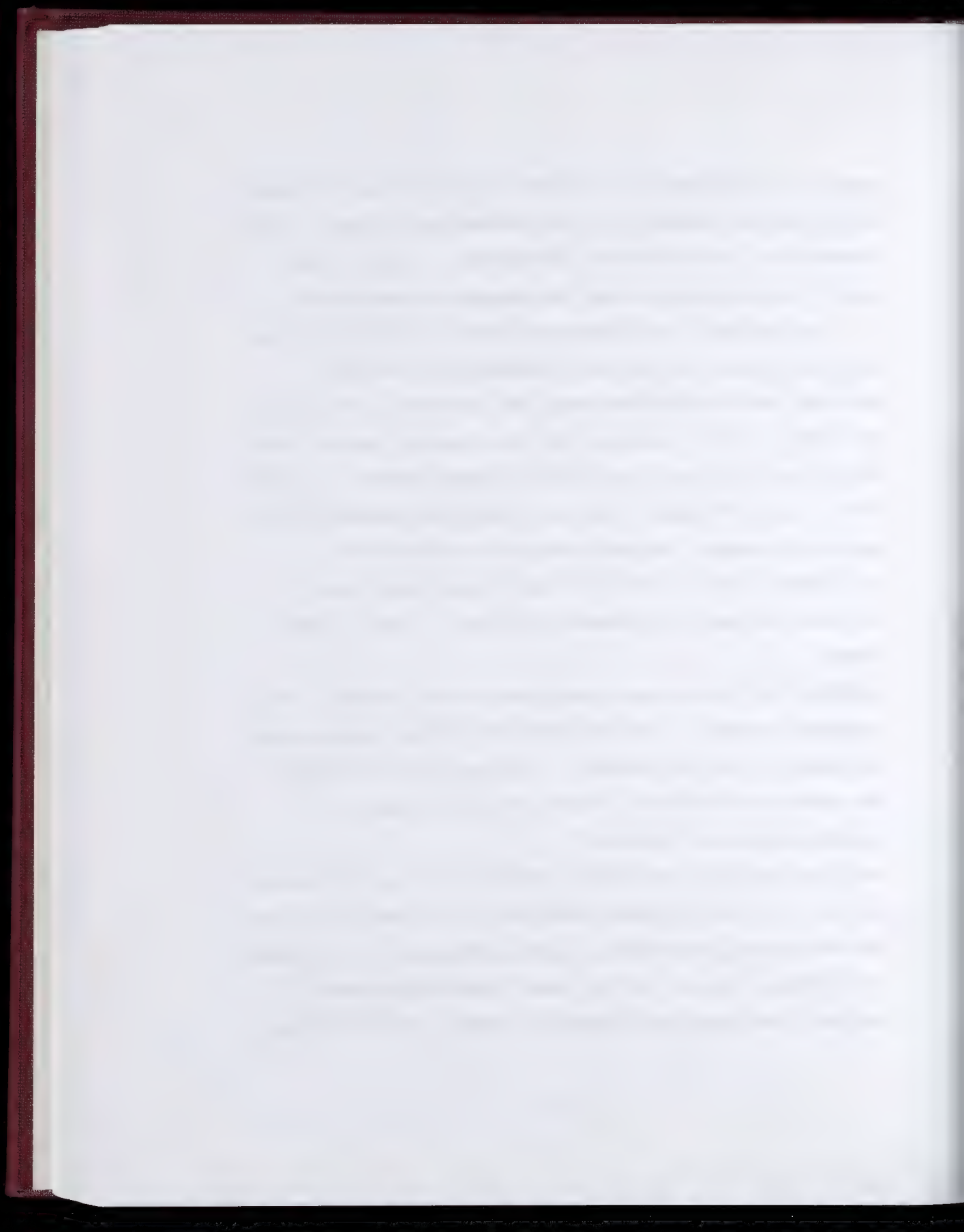


the flu. I was worn to a frazzle. We went down to Tryon, North Carolina, which is in the thermal belt--lovely, even climate--so I could recover down there, and then I came back. This was right after the opening of the museum.

But William-- We stayed very clear of him, but he was very much liked. He was very friendly with the old families, all the old families, and especially the ladies. Mrs. Mather, Mrs. Prentiss, and Mrs. Ingalls, and so forth and so on. And when I was finally named director, for the first couple of years it was very difficult because I was the child usurper, and that made life very difficult. But, anyhow, that's about all that I would say about William. We were not personally friendly. That's very simple.

GARDNER: We'll talk more about that later, I guess, in a different context. One more question on the dissertation, and then I'll let us proceed. Later on in your writing you refer quite a bit to [Henri] Focillon. Had you already run across Focillon?

LEE: No, not him personally. The first thing, of course, was his book on the Middle Ages and all its art, which was called The Art of the West in the Middle Ages. I had used Emile Mâle a lot earlier on, when I was working on my English misericords and cathedral bosses. Focillon came



to Yale. But that book he did [The Life of Forms in Art], I recommend it to my students all the time--a small book in which he had the essay "In Praise of Hands." I found his ideas very, very stimulating and very sympathetic. Tommy had suggested that I read some things by R. G. [Robin George] Collingwood. He discussed in music the same thing that Focillon discussed in drawing: the influence of the movement of the hand and the rhythms of the movements of the hand in terms of how the music sounds and how your mind moves with it in terms of interpreting, in an intellectual way, the music. Focillon had the same idea about what your hand does when you're drawing. I found that very stimulating and very sympathetic. Later, when I became friendly with a professor at Yale, Sumner McKnight Crosby, I heard a lot of stories about Focillon, because Crosby was a great friend of Focillon's and had been instrumental in having him brought to Yale. So, yes, I liked what I read.

GARDNER: Okay. Let's start out now with the Detroit Institute of Arts. What were your first impressions on arriving there?

LEE: Well, first of all, remember that I had gone to [James] Cooley High School in Detroit. My family lived in Detroit, so I knew something about Detroit. I had been a



visitor to the art institute. When we arrived there, we first found a half of a house not too far north, off of Woodward Avenue. We had no car. As a matter of fact, the first eight years of married life, we had no car. But it was a comfortable place. There was an English professor at Wayne [State] University who lived across the street with his wife and children, and we were friendly with them. It was much better than we had been living in before--\$2,650 was quite a bit for us at that time.

I went to the institute and its inner workings, and there were all these very difficult people. First of all, the institute itself was just beginning to emerge from the Depression. During that period, they had really been up against it. Because they were a municipal institution, their operation budget was from the city. They had a dual system. They had the city, which supported their operations and most of the salaries, civil service, and then they had the [Detroit Institute of Arts] Founders Society, which was a private, incorporated, not-for-profit group who had some endowment which was used for purchases and also for salaries and salary supplementation. I think [William R.] Valentiner's salary came from the Founders Society. It's a curious system, especially for someone whose only museum experience up



until that time had been as a voluntary assistant at [the] Cleveland [Museum of Art], which was a private institution. This was a little bit strange. Secondly, I was a complete stranger to the art world in Detroit. I knew none of the trustees. The director was William Valentiner. Originally, of course, Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner. He was a pupil of [Wilhelm von] Bode and had begun life in the field of Islamic art and came to the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] in 1912, I think it was, from Berlin as curator of Islamic art. He had gone back to Germany during the war. He was in the artillery reserve. He fought on the German side, but a more unlikely soldier I could never imagine.



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GARDNER: If you can continue, your description was just getting exciting.

LEE: Valentiner. After the war he was in Germany. He was friendly with the German expressionist painters. He knew them and collected them. Then he became a scholar in the field of Italian Renaissance art. But he also knew something about oriental art. He was a friend of Ernst Dietz, who was an orientalist in Berlin. He was a genuine man of the world and interested in all kinds of art, including modern. He came to Detroit as director back about 1924, '25, something like that.

The assistant director and administrator was Clyde Burroughs, who was not trained as an art historian but had become knowledgeable about American art. He was the curator of American painting and assistant director-- Excuse me, not assistant director, something corresponding to administrator. The assistant director was Edgar Preston Richardson--E. P. Richardson--who definitely was beginning to be a major specialist in American painting. The curator of European art and classical art was Francis Robinson, who was a very, very nervous and excitable person, very kind, but very nervous and excitable, totally

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overweight and totally unathletic--the antithesis of that. Very staccato way of talking and wide knowledge. He had been at Princeton, and his basic field was medieval art. The curator of textiles was Adèle Weibel--Swiss. Her daughter Liselotte [Moser] was a painter--very good painter--who had been crippled somewhat with polio and walked with braces and a cane. Adèle Weibel smoked cigarettes in a long cigarette holder and had a very thick German accent, as did her daughter Liselotte. Mrs. Weibel was very short, and she was getting on in years. She must have been, when I went there, in her late fifties. Seemed old to me. The curator of prints was Isabel Weadock, who was from an old Detroit family. I don't think she'd had much training. She was a very nice person and very energetic. Jack Newberry had worked in the print department, particularly on modern prints and drawings. It was a good department. Just before I was there, just before I arrived, Walter Heil had been there. He had left just a few weeks before I arrived to be director of the M. H. de Young [Memorial] Museum in San Francisco.

But the curator's corridor, beginning with Valentiner's office and the director's and trustees' room--Richardson worked in the trustees' room. Valentiner's office was next to that. Then the other offices were



strung out back, Heil's office and then Robinson's, and then I was moved in with Robinson, so we shared an office. Weibel's office was in the corner. That corridor was called "Berlin Allee." German was spoken there.

GARDNER: It's a good thing you learned German.

LEE: They spoke English of course, but you could hear it all the time. Valentiner was a big expert in the field of Renaissance art and also, in the old European tradition, gave expertise, endorsements on the back of photographs of pictures that this is indeed a genuine work of so-and-so and characteristic of the period of the 1620s and etc. He wouldn't give a value or anything like that, but authenticate the work, as did almost all European scholars outside of England. But this was considered very off-color by Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Valentiner was not liked a great deal by the establishment, but he was an extraordinary man.

His wife [Caecilia Valentiner] was a very, very sophisticated and interesting woman and very much interested in literature and poetry. Valentiner was interested in what was going on in art and, unlike other people who worked in the Italian Renaissance field or in old masters and so on, he was interested in contemporary art and collected it. He had beautiful German



expressionist things--Paul Klee and others. He had been a friend of [Ernest Ludwig] Kirchner's and of [Emil] Nolde's and [Karl] Schmidt-Rottluff's. He bought many American painters before anyone else did: Morris Graves, Mark Tobey, and so on. He was a real gentleman, tall, thin, birdlike, thin nose, and a very kind man to me. He was very patient.

He was in his office there, and then out in the corridor there was a big wooden bench with a back and so forth. Almost every day there would be some dealer there from Germany or from New York: a motley assortment of people. One of the people who was there very often was Paul Byk, who was the senior partner in Arnold Seligman Rey, one of the best dealers in New York. Byk was a huge man with big, fat, very sensuous, thick lips--wore always a dark suit. He was jabbering away in German out there all the time. Then there was a small fly-by-night dealer from New York named Siegfried Aram, who sold pictures and would come to get Dr. Valentiner to look at a picture or look at a photograph and advise him. It was something happening every minute.

Occasionally Valentiner would do something which I was incensed at at first, but gradually I realized that I had been right in principle but he had been right in



practice. Notable example: Not long after I was there-- I'd say a few months--a crate arrived and the shipping room called me and said, "There's something here for your department." I said, "I don't know about anything coming." He said, "Oh, it's for you." So I went out there. And there was a box from New York, and in it was a Japanese wood sculpture of an arhat. The registrar said that Dr. Valentiner had had it sent on from New York and they'd bought it and it was Kamakura period. I knew it wasn't Kamakura period, couldn't be Kamakura period. It was later. I was just furious, because he had done this without even saying boo to me about it, and I was very frosty and cold with him the next few days. But in the long run it wasn't Kamakura, but it was a very important and marvelous Edo period sculpture, and three more from the same set were in this country, one in the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] and two were in Kansas City. They'd come from a temple in Tokyo which was very important. He was right, maybe for the wrong reasons, but it was a good thing to have. So I simmered down and learned a lesson a little bit.

He had been responsible for most of the really good Chinese acquisitions at Detroit because of his friendship with Ernst Dietz in Berlin. The great northern Wei gilt



bronze, the dated gilt bronze of 520 A.D., and the big iron lion head, and notably the painting by Shên Chou with the calligraphy by Wang Ao, which is a masterpiece, a painting of the type that people didn't pay any attention to. He bought it just before I arrived from C. T. [Ching-tsi] Loo for something like \$300 or \$400. He was just interested in everything.

He was also into making me a less provincial and ignorant curator. For example, when they had the first of the big Rembrandt shows at Chicago--I think it was in '42 maybe--he himself paid for my train ticket. And I went and met him--he was giving a couple of lectures or something--at the Art Institute [of Chicago], and he took me around the exhibition and tried to deal with me. I think I was very difficult and probably very arrogant at that time. And still am I guess, but I know it--that's the difference. I didn't know it then. I remember we were looking at the Lucretia from Minneapolis, and I allowed as to how I really didn't like the painting. He said, "Now, you must look at it very carefully. Remember it's by Rembrandt. And if it's by Rembrandt you'd better look, because he's more likely to be right than you are." Well, that's true. I've learned not to just offhand throw away, discard, discount something just because my first



reaction is negative. First reactions can be very, very good, but negative first reactions can be very wrong. And that's one thing I learned, definitely, at that particular time.

We continued to be friends for a long time. He went to Raleigh, North Carolina [North Carolina Museum of Art] as their adviser/director before they ever had a building, after the war. He was the director of the Los Angeles County Museum [of Art], and, just to anticipate a bit, when I was out at Seattle from '46 to '48, I saw him occasionally in Los Angeles. He recommended when he retired in '51--I guess it was '51--to the board at Los Angeles County that I succeed him to be director of the art section. They then had a science and history and art-- And I thought about it, and I decided not to do it. Cleveland had been in contact with me that they might be getting some funds, so they might be able to have an oriental curator and would I be interested. So I knew that might be in the offing. And it's fortunate that I did that, because I would have been director and it would have been a mess, because after he left, the whole thing exploded. They had to separate natural science and history, and then there was that whole operation of building on the [La] Brea Tar Pits. It was just one damn



thing after another. So I escaped that. Valentiner occasionally came up to Seattle, because he was very friendly with Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, and I knew both of them quite well. He loved the woods up there. He loved that. He simply was a very, very, broad-gauged person. I know that some people say, and I believe them, that he could be very difficult. I don't think there was a crooked bone in his body. It was simply the European tradition, to give expertise. He didn't get much for it. He was very generous to other people. He was really my only direct contact with the old German tradition, which began with Bode, and there was Valentiner, and then I was his pupil, as it were. Before he left for North Carolina, he gave me a leather suitcase, a wonderful old-fashioned suitcase which had been given to him by Bode. I felt very proud to have the suitcase of Bode by way of Valentiner.

GARDNER: What was your job? I mean aside from the title. How did you find yourself occupying your days?

LEE: I had three main tasks: At my request--and Valentiner said fine--I was made curator for oriental art. Two, at that time there was Alger House, a mansion by Dan Fellows Platt, a famous neoclassical-style architect who built a lot of big houses in that area, and one of them was the Alger House--for the Alger family. It had been



given to the museum. It was Renaissance style. It's on the shore of the lake there out in Grosse Pointe, and it was turned into a museum of Italian Renaissance decorative arts, a branch museum. It was perfect for it. They had good furniture and majolica and so on out there. I was curator of that, and two days a week I had to go out there. Valentiner's apartment was in the wing, the servants' wing, of Alger House. That's where he and Mrs. Valentiner lived. Three, I was editor of The Bulletin [of the Cleveland Museum of Art]. So I had those three things to do.

Being in charge of Alger House was no big deal, because it was a fixed collection, except they had some small rooms up above where you could have special exhibitions. I started something there which I don't know if they still continue or not, but I started having at Christmastime a sales exhibition drawn from material, inexpensive material, from the New York dealers. You could get some wonderful stuff then for very little. I included oriental material in that. It caught on and we sold quite a bit, and some of the pieces came to the museum. So you could have little exhibitions up there. I had an exhibition of Rajput painting up there, I remember, once. But the permanent collection was fixed. Valentiner



and I had somewhat different ideas, occasionally, about how things should look. He was of the old Kaiser-Friedrich[-Museum] school. He loved to have Renaissance textiles and things around, including Renaissance velvet runners on tables and so forth. I was the Shaker school of pristine purity.

GARDNER: And simplicity. [laughter]

LEE: I went to the Alger House every Tuesday and Thursday. I'd get there Tuesday morning and I would remove the-- There were two runners that annoyed me particularly. I would remove the two runners off the table, and it just looked wonderful. Then when Valentiner came back, either Tuesday night, or sometimes he'd wait until Thursday, he'd put the runners back. We wouldn't say a word. I didn't say anything to him about it and he didn't say anything to me about it. So maybe two days out of the week it was simple, and the rest of the week it was velvet.

I just learned an awful lot from him. He believed in the Kaiser-Friedrich system of installation, which was an attempt to recreate the context of the individual works of art. So the rooms at Detroit-- The quattrocento room had moldings done in quattrocento style, had quattrocento furniture; the Venetian High Renaissance room was



different, and so on. He bought a small chapel to house some of the Gothic and stained glass, just as it was in the Kaiser-Friedrich. Now, I learned the contextual argument from him on that. At the same time, I realized that it was phony. It just didn't look right if you really knew it. He ignored the bad parts of it. He wouldn't look at it--just didn't see it. What he saw was what he knew from Europe, and it was a context--it would have worked. But I think the purist thing is just as bad the other way. I think it is a terrible mistake to hang Renaissance paintings or baroque paintings in a pure environment. It may look marvelous with Mondrian or modern sculpture, but it just doesn't have the tone and the flavor that the paintings have. It is very hard to get, and you can make mistakes. All this was percolating and filtering through, and I was learning, very definitely.

GARDNER: You'd been at Cleveland, in a place that had a very strong education program with Thomas Munro and so on. Was there anything like that at Detroit?

LEE: There wasn't much education. They didn't have any money. They were still pretty well broke. They began to work more on education, I think, after I left in '46. I think Isabel Weadock did some lectures for adults. There



was a man--I think he came a little later, after I was basically out of there--named John Morse. They had sort of a lecture program with mostly travel talks, you know: Branson De Cou-- And who was the one who did the movies, the travel movies?

GARDNER: Lowell Thomas?

LEE: Lowell Thomas. Those kinds of things, which were popular, and they made some money on it I think. Occasionally they had lectures too, and that was John Morse I think. But the educational effort was really relatively minimal.

Burroughs was a very pleasant man, easy to talk to; you could go in and talk to him at any time. Valentiner was always really very busy. He worked awfully hard. Burroughs was very amiable but not very energetic. He bought a few things in the American field--good ones--but he wasn't really a builder.

Richardson was. We got to know him quite well. His wife, Constance Richardson, was a painter. A very good one. Sort of a latter-day-- Her work looked like early George Inness. Rather meticulous but very nice, nice mood landscapes in New England and other regions. They always traveled every summer. Ted and Constance would travel to a new place. They went once up to Duluth [Minnesota] and



she did some landscapes up there--very nice, with these very spacious, long views and peculiar light. She was a good painter. But she was-- Definitely not malicious, but a little-- She liked to provoke people a bit. Just a slight acidic quality. But we got along very well. Ted was very serious. She had a very good sense of humor; she was quite bubbly.

Ted was very serious and he worked very hard. He had to. Valentiner was like a bird--he was here and there and so forth. Ted, as assistant director, had to keep the thing on an even keel, which he did very well. He was very painstaking. He had a very good eye and a very serious understanding of American painting. He did an absolutely superb job, I think, in building that American painting collection there, ahead of everyone else, when it could be done for very, very small sums of money. I had a lot of respect for him. He was rather dry. No sense of humor--a little, not much. He was very much aware of my being a bumptious youth, and he tried to keep me calmer. We had one contretemps, which I'll mention in a minute.

We were very friendly with Weibel. She was kind of a window onto the world of European gossip. She loved gossip and she had contacts all over the place. She was a very knowledgeable expert on textiles and built a very



fine collection there at Detroit.

Well, I got to Detroit, and I was very ambitious for the oriental department. Despite the fact that I knew something about Chinese and Indian art from my work with [James Marshall] Plumer and my work with Howard Hollis, Japanese art I knew very little about, because at that time Japanese art was very unpopular. The Japanese gallery was dismantled during the war and the Japanese material was removed. But I decided that the collection didn't have anything on Indian art and certain aspects of Chinese art, so I wanted to buy things for it. And lo and behold, there was indeed a dedicated purchase fund, the Sarah Bacon Hill Fund, which was restricted to works of oriental art.

GARDNER: Bravo.

LEE: So the first piece I bought-- I had been introduced to all the dealers in New York by Howard Hollis. As a matter of fact, C. T. Loo, who was the biggest dealer in Chinese and Indian art, before I had a job, offered me a job at his place in New York. I said, "No, I don't want to go into the business." But Loo had a few Indian sculptures, including bronzes, that he had acquired through the French expert who lived in Madras [India]. There was a French sort of concession in Pondicherry, near



Madras, and there was that scholar named Jouveau-Dubrevil who picked up stuff, including bronzes, and sold them to Loo to augment his income. Loo had this Indian bronze female figure of Uma, a big, wonderful-quality, early Chola period. Really just a splendid piece. It was \$2,500. Today it would be half a million dollars. And the Sarah Bacon Hill Fund had more than that in it; it had about \$3,000. So that was the first purchase. Valentiner thought it was terrific and Richardson liked it. It was wonderful.

So I was able to use that Hill Fund for purchases. We bought the bronze Uma. We bought from H. Kevorkian a stone sculpture, a splendid tenth-century Rajputana sculpture from Khajuraho that was down in his basement. That was, I think, \$1,800. We bought a very fine Chinese gilt bronze warrior figure, T'ang dynasty. Then I was in Pierre Matisse [Gallery]-- Because if I went to New York, I went to the modern dealers, too. I always went to see him. He was a terribly nice man. He had a glass case in his own private office in which there were various nonmodern things, including a splendid Cambodian bronze. Garuda with big wings spread out. A marvelous piece, \$1,000. So I grabbed that. Then I'd been introduced by Hollis to the French dealers in ancient art and Indian and

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BY
JOSEPH NEALE
OF THE BARR

IN TWO VOLUMES.
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AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIELD,
IN THE CORNER OF
NASSAU AND NATHAN STREETS.
1808.

Cambodian art, Paul Mallon and Margot Mallon. They had another Cambodian bronze, which I think was \$1,500, Vishnu. That goes with the Garuda, because Garuda is the vehicle of Vishnu. Then I bought a Chinese painting from C. F. Yao at Ton Ying and Company by Kuò Hsü, early Ming dynasty, one of the few Ming paintings that were bought before World War II. So I was able to develop a little bit the collection with pieces that are still well worth looking at. But I wanted to have an exhibition. You can't be a man unless you have an exhibition!

I was still somewhat full of [Ananda] Coomaraswamy and that whole bit, and there had never been an exhibition of Buddhist art. Since Buddhism is one of the great and important world religions and so forth, why not have an exhibition of Buddhist art? So I proposed this and tried to establish a budget for it which would be acceptable. Valentiner said okay. Richardson was skeptical. He thought it was a little bit iffy. Anyhow, I had to have it, so we went ahead with it. We had the special exhibition. Japanese art was not included, because it was 1942.

It had to have a catalog. We had to do a catalog. I did it on a shoestring. There were two artists who were working in the Detroit area. One was Ernest Mundt, a



designer who later became the director of the California School of Fine Arts, and Richard Lippold, who has since become very famous. Lippold was a sculptor then too, always. They became very friendly with Mrs. Valentiner. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Valentiner, I think, later on ran off with Mundt. I talked to Mundt. He said he'd do the design of the catalog for nothing. I had him do a rendering of the Trishula and Wheel of the Law at stupa three at Sanchi to put on the cover. He also did a map of the movement of Buddhism through Asia. We did this catalog, and I had it printed at a tiny little press out in Ann Arbor. We printed three hundred copies, I think. I think it cost \$400. I'll get it for you. I just remembered where it is. Well, the exhibition catalog was put together on a shoestring, but we did get it out. And it sold pretty well. I think, as a matter of fact, the catalog just about broke even or maybe made a little bit. But the text of the catalog is a little bit on the Coomaraswamy mysterious East side. The first thing I did was a tiny little picture book--handbook--for the oriental collection, which was very much a Coomaraswamy-style introduction. But this one I was beginning to recover a little bit.

It was reasonably well received. I had a big



contretemps with Richardson. In retrospect, I think he may well have been right. We had a Buddhist fresco of substantial size, maybe three feet wide and ten feet high. I wanted that moved into the special exhibition galleries, to go in the proper place in the exhibition so that it would be part of the context. Richardson said it was foolish to move it because people could just go over to the other gallery and look at it. I insisted that it should be in context. So we moved it, with considerable difficulty, and Richardson and I were not speaking to each other for a couple of weeks. But quite a few people came, and I think it was reasonably successful. It was my first experience at doing a special exhibition, except for my assisting Howard Hollis in doing the Chinese ceramic exhibition at Cleveland.

But in general there was not that much interest in oriental art in Detroit. There was a little bit, but not an awful lot. Detroit basically is an automobile town, and those people are interested in other things. We never knew until-- We met a Chinese couple through the Buddhist exhibition. He was an engineer and he took us once to something we didn't know existed, which was a large sort of supper club and gambling joint where all the automobile moguls and people were all the time. We knew nothing

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AND
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE
IN THE KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND
IN TWO VOLUMES
THE SECOND VOLUME
LONDON
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1764

about this. We really knew none of the trustees. The trustees were Valentiner's bailiwick and also Richardson's. We met Mrs. Ralph Booth once at her house. I think there was a dinner there. But basically we knew people at Wayne University and a few people on the staff. We were pretty much on our own. By then we had our first child, Katharine, and Ruth was very busy, naturally, with that.

I remember several things that happened that are of some interest. One, I got into a big debate or argument by mail with Margaret Mead, because we had a photographic exhibition, which I was put in charge of, on Bali. I, still in my mysterious East phase, took exception to some of the anthropological approaches that were in the labels connected with the Balinese religion, and I had two or three letters to her. I received letters from her telling me how mistaken I was, which I was. Then there were lectures in the auditorium, and one of the programs was W. H. Auden. He came to the museum and was going through the galleries. I met him and I think he was trying to make a pickup. But anyhow, we went to a bar not far away and had a very interesting discussion. Then I said I had to go home to dinner with my wife and child. And off I went, and he went off. I at least had a good hour's



discussion with him about the Coomaraswamy approach. He was of course, at that time, somewhat interested in the same region of ideas. Not those specifically, but he was interested in what was called traditional society. Across the river in Windsor [Canada], Wyndham Lewis was spending his time. We saw him a couple of times and got to at least be able to speak for a few hours on his experience with vorticism and also this business of traditional society, etc. So we were still connected with all kinds of interesting things and ideas.

But Katharine was born in fall '41, and we were doing all right. I had a deferment in the draft because of family, and I was increasingly, you know, uncomfortable with working at the museum while the war was going on. Remember I told you I was working in spectroscopy. I asked around, and Edsel Ford, who was president of the board and a terribly nice man, a real gentleman, said, "Well, you know, if you want to do something--" And I said, "Can I get a job doing something that would be part of the war effort?" He asked me what I knew, and I told him all the work I'd done in science, and that was spectroscopy. He said, "We're making Pratt and Whitney airplane engines for the army and the navy. They have a rigid quality control for the metal, and it's done by



spectroscopy." So I went on and applied. And sure enough, I knew enough so that they made me assistant to the head of the lab that tested the special alloy of magnesium that went into the Pratt and Whitney engines. His name was Walter Bryan, and I was the assistant to the lab head. Then we had four workers who simply did the routine running while we did the analysis. So I went to work with Ford Motor Company in the spectroscopy lab.

GARDNER: How did the museum feel about this?

LEE: Well, I told them that I'd come in when I could--I'd come in on Saturdays to try to keep things going, on a voluntary basis--but that I hoped that they would give me some leave so that I could do this. And they did. It saved them money.

So I worked in the lab there for a while. Let's see, I would say it was sort of early to mid '43 that I moved over there and started work there. I kept working there, and then there was one occasion where the workers decided to go out on strike for reasons that I thought were absolutely pointless. I didn't believe that they should strike anyhow because of the war. What they wanted was perfectly ridiculous. So Bryan and I-- They went out on strike, four of them. We ran the lab, got all the analyses out, did all the work, and still had time left



over so that we could play chess. These four workers were just unbelievably unproductive. And then I got some experience: I got a threatening phone call from somebody, anonymous, about my being a scab, etc. I retaliated by simply saying that at least I'm not a traitor and so on. The usual stuff.

Then things went on and Ruth was pregnant again. And I was increasingly uncomfortable. Finally I said, "I think I ought to volunteer. I frankly would much rather be in the navy and I would rather have officer's training than to be a doughboy." So I signed up for officer's training. In February or March of '44, I went into the officer's training program in the navy at Fort Schuyler, outside New York. Then I went to pick up my ship in Astoria, Oregon. Well, before going there to pick up the ship, I had gone to the Bremerton Naval Yard in Seattle, where I was born. Now I was curator of oriental art in Detroit, and I went to the museum and made myself known to Dr. Richard Fuller, who was the president of the board, the chief donor, and the director of the Seattle Art Museum. And we hit it off very well. He was an object person. He didn't know anything about paintings much, but he was a real object person. We hit it off very well, and



he said, "You know, I need help here. Why don't you think about coming to the museum?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I've got this job at Detroit--"



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GARDNER: You were about to describe your embarkation at Seattle.

LEE: Well, I was then, let's see, twenty-six. For the navy, that was not old, but older than a lot of the recent college graduates who were there and also in officers training. The training was uneventful, except Bill Dickey, the New York Yankee catcher, was one of the new officers being trained there. It was very interesting playing pickup softball with Bill Dickey behind the plate. I did rather poorly on the mathematical test, but they told me that I had the best score on the visual perception test. So I came out an ensign.

GARDNER: And that validated your choice of career as well.

LEE: Yes. Ensign. And we commissioned our boat, the APA--attack transport--175, the U.S.S. Karnes, and set sail. We practiced and trained off Catalina Island, and we were into Los Angeles and into San Francisco. Then we took off for the war zone, going to Honolulu, where we picked up troops. We were just transferring. They didn't think, I think, that our ship was quite ready yet. We were taking troops somewhere down there that was recently

THE
HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY
JOSEPH NEALE
OF THE BOSTON BAR
IN TWO VOLUMES
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captured and moved on.

We stopped in Honolulu, and there I made a point of going to the Honolulu Academy [of Art], of course, and seeing the collection there. Gump's had a very good store there run by Mrs. Bowen, who was also a trustee of the Honolulu Academy. I met her, and she was very friendly and took pity on the poor ensign who was eating this lousy food. She had a big avocado tree out in her garden. Her house had beautiful Chinese antiquities and things. I would pick a bag full of avocados and take them back to ship, before we were going to ship off, and put them in the officers mess refrigerator with a sign on it saying "S. E. Lee Personal Property." Nobody liked avocados except me, but I loved them.

The shipboard activity was very interesting. I was the first division officer. That meant I was in charge of the fore part of the ship, the unloading of the equipment and the discipline in the troop barracks, or hold where they were quartered. I also took the occasion to work on my navigation, because I'd been very good in trigonometry and geometry. That kind of mathematics I was pretty good at. I studied carefully, because I thought being in the navigation department would be much more interesting than being a deck officer.



Finally we had troops that were going to go to the Philippines, and we took them through Ulithi and then we landed them. We arrived just as things were getting under control and landed troops outside Manila. Then we went to Guam and loaded up some more troops and we went to join the invasion of Okinawa. We were at Okinawa, anchored out with a destroyer protection screen which-- My brother [David Lee], incidentally, was on a destroyer unit.

GARDNER: Were you aware of that? Did you know the two of you were that close?

LEE: No. Not then. I knew he was somewhere, but I didn't know he was right out there. We were present for the invasion and the Battle of Okinawa. I remember my only close contact with combat was a very scary one. We had arrived and we were unloading ammunition from both the fore and the aft holds--high explosives. It was daytime, and they had various sorts of fog-making things to keep things so that the kamikaze planes would not have a clean shot at anything. It was a pretty good breeze and things were blowing away. A kamikaze plane came up right-- We were anchored about two hundred to three hundred yards from a cruiser, a Cleveland class cruiser. We were there with all our holds open, high explosives and everything. And this kamikaze plane-- We saw it coming and we got to



our guns and began shooting. The cruiser began shooting. He had antiaircraft fire all around him. He just came right up half way between us, over. You could almost say you saw the pilot look down and make his choice. And he picked the cruiser. So he dove and hit the cruiser on the number two turret and killed about a dozen people. But if he'd come for us, the whole ship would have blown up, out of the water. Everybody would have been gone. Well, that was a very interesting experience.

GARDNER: Sobering.

LEE: Sobering experience is right. But that was our one major action.

Then I was made assistant navigator. That meant that I would get up early, three thirty A.M. or four A.M., well before dawn, to get ready for the dawn-star sight as soon as the horizon became visible. And in the evening, we'd do the evening-star sight. In the middle of the day we'd do the sun sight for the midday position. We were a small department. We had a quartermaster and a couple of assistant seamen who assisted in maintaining the navigation shack. But you could read. As a deck officer, I was in a room with three other officers, double deck. As the assistant navigator, I had a single small room. I could paste up reproductions of paintings; I had my little



shelf of books to read. It was a much less confined, more interesting life. And I enjoyed navigation. It was fascinating. I enjoyed the sea and the sky at night and in the morning.

On the Philippines bit, we were in that big typhoon that hit and destroyed quite a few ships. That was frightening but was also quite an exhilarating experience to go through with waves coming over the top of the ship sixty, seventy feet high. It was nature at its most powerful and its most awesome. That really was an experience, and I'm glad I went through it. And I'm glad I got through it. It was something.

But then we were informed of the war's end. I'll never forget the day. We were sailing in convoy at night, following the zigzag pattern that you do to avoid submarine attack. We knew that things were getting ready for the invasion of Japan and we were supposed to be going to pick up our troops for the invasion of Japan. We were supposed to take troops in on Kyushu, at the harbor of Sasebo on the western side of Kyushu. Word came through that the Japanese had surrendered and that there had been this big explosion. All very unclear. But anyhow, if the Japanese had surrendered, there would be a message to stand by. It went on for maybe half an hour, forty-five



minutes. But then the word came through from the admiral, from the admiral's flagship, to light ship. We had been traveling for two years--at least I had been traveling for two years--at sea at night with portholes closed and everything absolutely pitch-black. Here was this big convoy--we must have had well over a hundred ships--and all of a sudden they gave the command to light ship. And all the lights turned on, on all the ships. It was just fantastic, just fantastic. And everybody cheered. It was much more exciting than Duke [University] beating [University of] Michigan.

Then we were informed that we were going to take occupying force--marines--into the place we were supposed to have invaded, Sasebo. And here I was, assistant navigator, a lieutenant junior grade instead of an ensign. I had gotten to know the captain. He was not regular navy--he had been in the merchant marine--but he was in the naval reserve. He had been given this ship. He was captain, but he was not Naval Academy, and he was treated rather badly, I think, by the navy. But he was a fly fisherman, so we conversed on the bridge at night. We had a lovely relationship. Here I was on this ship, and we were going into Sasebo harbor in that narrow opening in the angle, docking to unload troops and equipment. And it



was Japan. This was Japan! I had never been to the Orient, I had never been to Europe.

GARDNER: The curator of oriental art.

LEE: The curator of oriental art had never been. I didn't know much about Japanese art. But anyhow, I asked the captain, "We're going to be docked here for a while and the navigation department hasn't got anything to do. Can I duck off and see if I can get in?" We were only about twelve to fifteen miles away from the famous Arita porcelain kilns, which produced some of the great Japanese porcelains of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and still are in operation. He said, "Well, you know, we're coming in to occupy this country." I said, "Well, the war is over, isn't it?" And he said, "Well, sure, go ahead if you want to. But you be back here by evening, because I don't know when we're going to pull out of here."

So I went down and I scrounged around and found a marine lieutenant who was busy-- Everybody was going souvenir hunting. He had a jeep, and I said, "Well, how about letting me borrow your jeep? I've got my map here, and it's a very simple drive to this place where they have a porcelain manufactory--a famous old porcelain manufactory." He said, "I'll go along with you." So we hopped in and we just took off from Sasebo, up the road.



The first town we came to was not Arita proper but was in that area, and here was this big shop. In Japan at the kilns they have their own galleries, as it were. Nice wooden buildings, traditional, but inside just loaded with ceramics. I didn't have much money or anything, but we went in. I suppose that we could have been greeted with people with spears who wanted to-- But very polite. No English, no Japanese. We bought a few porcelains--very nice quality--and we took off and went back. So that was my first direct contact with Japan.

We left there, and lo and behold, the next thing that happened was we were to go and take marines to Tientsin [China]. The harbor of Tientsin is called Tangku and the bay of Chihli is very shallow, and all the troops had to be unloaded into troop boats and ferried to the shore. We had a lot to do and we had no orders that I knew of. This was weeks later, after I'd been in Japan.

I went to the captain. I remember I said, "Look, I'm sorry, but here we are, we're about forty miles from Peking, and I'm supposed to be a big expert on Chinese art and so forth and I don't know nothing, and I've got to get there. I've got to see Peking."

He said, "Well, you know, how are we going to get there?"



I said, "I've been told that the trains are running, that there are a lot of guerrillas around--" The communist guerrillas were in the hills outside Peking and north of Tientsin.

He said, "Well, I'll tell you the same thing. I don't know when we're going to leave." He said, "I think we'll be here at least three days, maybe four, but beyond that, I don't know. If you want to go, go ahead. I'll have my skiff drop you at the beach. But if you aren't back here when we lift anchor, you're AWOL, and that's going to be very, very hard."

And I said, "Thank you, sir."

I got the money I had together. I had borrowed some money from some of the other officers, and I put it in different places. I took a bag with some spare clothes and went to the beach, and there were a lot of marines around, milling around with jeeps and so on. I got one of them to give me a ride into Tientsin. He dropped me off at a seedy-looking Russian hotel which was very close to the railroad station. I went right to the railroad station. There was one Chinese in the ticket office who could speak some English. I asked about trains, and he said, "No trains." Then he said, "Maybe train tonight." I said, "Well, you see that hotel over there? I'm going



to be in there, and if you get any idea that there is going to be a train, please--" I gave him some money. I said, "Send me a note and I'll get it." So I went to the Russian hotel, which was really a sleazy place, red sort of velvet, old red velvet walls, bugs and the whole bit, and this old lady with hennaed hair at the desk. I said I was going to take a nap, but that if anybody came to please wake me up immediately.

Well, lo and behold, about four A.M. a message came that a train was going to be leaving. So I grabbed my stuff and ran over to the station. And here was this train and it was packed. People in, hanging on the side, hanging on top. So I elbowed--I was in uniform--my way in, got on the train, and was standing there, and there was a sheepherder who was sitting and then there was another man there. This sheepherder elbowed the other man out and said something to him and then asked me to please have a seat, which I did. And he smelled to absolute high heaven and he had goat cheese, which he offered me, and I took some. I happen to like stinky cheese. So that was fine; he was very kind. And then there were soldiers on the train with guns and so on, live ammunition. And we started.

That train ride usually takes about two hours--two



and a half maximum--from Tientsin to Peking. It took us nine hours and we stopped every so often. Troops would get off and go up into the hills and there would be gunfire and so on. But anyhow, we moved along. The train would be coming up from Tientsin and would come up here and then you'd see the walls. You saw the walls of Peking there, and then the train would turn and go right along and then turn again and go into the station. So you went right past the walls, about a quarter of a mile away. Oh, I was beside my self with excitement. I got off at the station and then I walked through the south gate all the way in and through the inner gate, all the way up to the area where the hotels were. There was the Grand Hotel des Wagon-Lits, which was one of the better hotels in Peking. I got a room there with no problem. The city was empty of foreigners. The Japanese had gone and the Russians hadn't come. I was one of the few Western people in Peking.

At the hotel they spoke French and of course some English. I could speak French well enough. I got a very comfortable room and I got a map and I just started out. I went to see all this, and I was just in seventh heaven. Then that evening I asked if they knew of a rickshaw boy--they had rickshaws still then--who spoke a little English, and they got me one. I told him I wanted dinner--number



one dinner, good. He took me to a restaurant which was a typical old Chinese restaurant. Chinese, almost like a small palace. I was the only one there at the restaurant. They greet you at the door, they get your name, and they call out your name, that you're coming, and they do it again when you get to the next court. And then there was a room for me. There was a raised platform, almost like a throne, and a table and-- What a meal. It was fantastic. That was the end of my first day in Peking.

GARDNER: We're about to eat lunch. This will raise our appetites if you could tell me something about that dinner. Since they got you sitting there in this--

LEE: Well, the thing I remember best was it was the first time that I had really very good, delicious, well-made Chinese dumplings. And I remember every bite. Because, you know, food on the ship is good compared to food in the army, but it is still not all that great, and a surfeit of beef. But the dumplings were very thin pastry and flexible, and inside would be a little bit of either minced pork or minced chicken or some fish or something. And then the gravy, the liquid, was inside too and was pinched tight and then steamed, so that when you pop it in your mouth and you chew, this flood of delicious consommé with the meat explodes in your mouth. It's just heaven.



When we're in China, we always have as many dumplings as we can get, because they're wonderful and totally unlike the usually very sad things you get in Chinese restaurants here.

GARDNER: No wonder you can't eat in restaurants.

LEE: Then there was a wonderful steamed fish too, which was something like a grouper, which was just wonderful and just as tender as could be. And fresh fruit. So that was a great experience.

Next morning I got up very early, before dawn. I had my rickshaw boy waiting, and he took me out, way out to the north gate. Outside there, it was just as if you'd gone back into the days of Marco Polo and Kublai Khan, with the camel caravans forming up to go north into Manchuria. Just outside, it was just unbelievable. The Imperial Palace was very run-down. And guards, Chinese army people, Kuomintang, didn't seem terribly friendly. But then I found the street in which the antique stores were, which is Lulichang. Today it's sort of a tourist thing, but still it's Lulichang, and that's where the antique stores are kept together. I went in here and there, and they were surprised to see anyone, especially anyone who knew anything. I did know something about Chinese art and ceramics and so forth, and I saw some



marvelous stuff which was very, very cheap. I'd saved this money, and I bought a Tz'u-chou pillow, I think for two dollars; I bought a Chinese bronze fitting for a few bucks and a couple of jades; I bought a nice--really very good--nineteenth-century embroidered coat for my wife; and I got a couple of other embroideries for a couple of the officers who had given me some money. I had a lovely time there, and one of the dealers was one of the big ones. I knew nothing about the dealers in Peking. I should have perhaps known, but I didn't.

GARDNER: Well, that country was mostly closed off during that entire period. The Japanese had taken it over--

LEE: Sure, sure. So anyhow, that. Then that was the second day. The third day I went down to the Altar of Heaven and I went to see a couple of pagodas. Then I began to get a little nervous. So I got the train, which went back very uneventfully. It went back in short order, no more than four hours. I got to Tientsin and the marines were still around. I got a jeep ride back to the beach and hooked a ride with one of the navy boats--there were a lot of them on the beach--and he took me out to the Karnes. I got there, went up the gangplank, and there reported in. The captain said, "Good idea. We're leaving first thing in the morning." And then-- You know a



uniform--there's a sewn place for your pencil or pen. I had very carefully rolled up a twenty dollar bill, tight. I had put it in there for safekeeping, and of course I forgot about it. When I got back to the ship, I discovered that I still had twenty dollars that I hadn't spent. And that just killed me, because I could have gotten some other nice goodies.

Then we went back and were told we were going to decommission the ship and get our papers out at San Francisco. So we went to San Francisco, and we were about halfway through decommissioning, during which you have to inventory everything and account for everything that was issued in your department. We were halfway through this and we got word: "Stop decommissioning, get back in service. You're going to be decommissioned in Norfolk." So we had a day to get back in shape and took off. We went down through the Panama Canal.

The captain had some old friends in the navy--widows, two widows--that he had to meet and pay respects to in Panama City. He asked me if I would mind coming with him to be the fourth, because he said he didn't feel comfortable taking anyone else. I said, "Sure, I'll go." So we went--captain's gig--to the wharf and then we went to this very nice typical tropical hotel, had a lovely



dinner, and then came back. Then we took off and went up past Cuba, towards Norfolk [Virginia].

We hit Norfolk harbor. You have to go through a channel to get to the inner wide channel. The captain was very antsy. He wanted to get ashore. I was very antsy and I wanted to get off fast, and there was a fog so thick you couldn't see anything--just terrible. The captain said, "Do you think you could possibly get up through this and into our berth in this weather, or do we have to wait out here until it lifts?" So I got my best radar officer--by that time I was navigator--Ensign Polley. I said, "You think we can bounce that thing off all these buoys as we go in and pilot our way down the channel?" And he said, "Sure, why not. I'll be on it myself all the time." So we got started. The captain kept headway so the ship wouldn't drift much. We started down the channel and we zeroed in on each buoy as we went by. We marked it and kept going. By golly, we took it right in, took it right up to the mooring ball.

The captain said, "If you get us in, you can leave the ship. I'll let you go with your papers as the hook goes down." I had my bags all packed as we were coming in. I had everything ready. We tied to the buoy and the captain said, "Lower the hook." As they lowered the hook,



they lowered the captain's gig with me in it, and I was off to the beach waving good-bye to my comrades, who still had to decommission the ship. I went through the discharge office I think as fast as anybody ever has and grabbed the train from Norfolk to Asheville, North Carolina. I got off the train in Asheville, North Carolina, and got a ride to Weaverville [North Carolina].

In the meantime our second child, Margaret [Lee], had been born. I had seen her very briefly when I had a leave. I was able to take a leave and be in Weaverville for two days when we were in San Francisco at the end of the war, and that was the first time I'd seen her. I saw her for those two days, and I had to go back to the ship and on out. But then I got to Weaverville and we were reunited as a family, all together again, and that was just terrific. That was a great, great day for everybody.

GARDNER: Oh, I bet. What had the Detroit Institute of Arts done all this time?

LEE: They just got along without a curator.

GARDNER: So you didn't have a job to go back to there?

LEE: Oh, no, I did. We went back and I was full-time. They kept the position open. They were saving money; they didn't want to spend money, you see. I was technically on leave of absence without pay. We went back. [William R.]



Valentiner had gone, and they gave us the apartment at Alger House that he'd had and we lived there for a few months.

I think we got back to Detroit in June. Then in September came word from Howard [C.] Hollis that he was going to be going to Japan as officer in charge of protection/preservation of Japanese cultural property. He had to have an assistant, and did I want to come? Well, we'd just gotten back together, and my family couldn't come with me until-- They had a system in the occupation where your family could come, and the speed at which they could come depended on your war service, if you accumulated a certain number of points for war service. It would mean a delay. I would have to go in late September, and they would be coming in December, because I had some points.

GARDNER: You had never seen your second daughter.

LEE: Once, when I was on that two-day leave from San Francisco. Then, of course, when I got out, then we were together again. That leave was very emotionally disturbing, because of course she didn't know me from Adam. She was already about five, six, seven months old and she didn't know who this person was. That was not very satisfactory. But now we were together again at

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Alger House. They could swim in the lake outside. And one of the Ford sons-- I don't know which one. Ruth [Ward Lee] knows. Anyhow, his brother and he and our children would play together at their house, and Grosse Pointe was not far away. Of course, this was a big house. We were living in the servants quarters, but still it was better than anything we'd had before.

Everything was just going along when this thing came up about Japan. Ruth and I talked it over. She agreed that we just couldn't resist it. Plus the fact that it was a very good salary. I was a civilian and I would have the assimilated rank of major, which meant that I would have priority for various things, in terms of housing and so on. So we decided we would do it, and I left for Japan.

The plane went to Seattle and Seattle to Anchorage and Anchorage to Tokyo, I guess. It was a long flight. I stopped in Seattle and met Dick [Richard] Fuller again and told him what I was doing. He said, "Well, why don't you come out here? I'll pay so much, and you can be assistant director. We can work together on developing the collection." I had told Detroit of this offer, which would be very, very good for everybody concerned. And they said, "If you want to go, go." I don't remember-- I



think it was left open. I don't know if it was a leave of absence or not. I think it was left open. Dick said, "Please, why don't you do this." And so I said okay. Ruth agreed. We liked Seattle and we agreed that we would do it. I sent a letter of resignation to Detroit. Then Dick said that they would take me on whenever I came back from Japan at such and such a salary.

So I got to Japan and moved into the Dai-ichi Hotel. The colonels and better could stay at the Imperial Hotel. The Dai-ichi Hotel was one of the several hotels. I stayed in another hotel part of the time, too, called the Yashima Hotel, but the Dai-ichi Hotel was right downtown. Howard Hollis was in the Dai-ichi Hotel. We started working at the Radio Tokyo building on the protection/preservation of Japanese cultural property.

GARDNER: What did that mean? Describe exactly what your charge was.

LEE: It was the same thing as the Arts and Monuments Division in Europe except we were civilians. Howard had the assimilated rank of a lieutenant colonel. I had the assimilated rank of a major. We were in the Civil Information and Education Section of Supreme Commander for the Allied Power. We were responsible for the protection of registered cultural property, whether in private or



public hands. We were responsible for national parks. We were responsible for the encouragement of the living artists and to encourage the democratization of Japanese museums and to see that there was evenhanded fair play. In Japan they had these different living-artist societies. They each held an annual exhibition, and it was held at the municipal gallery in Ueno Park. There had been all kinds of problems with this group and that group, and we were supposed to see that the contemporary scene in Tokyo went smoothly.

We had two allied inspectors. One was Captain [Alfred] Popham, who was primarily an architectural gardener, a garden architect, and Charles Gallagher, who was a shark at languages and was interested in the arts and spoke Japanese very well. We had two interpreter clerks, one male, one female; we had a secretary, Georgina Potts, a great big woman; we had, in each prefecture in Japan, a native representative, who was usually either a professor, art historian, or a member of one of the museums. In each prefecture we had that representative who reported to us. We were in the Civil Information and Education Section, the same level as the Education Section, the Religion Section, the Information Section. We reported to the head of the Civil Information and



Education Section, who was Lieutenant Colonel Nugent, USMC [United States Marine Corps]. His assistant was a woman captain. I can't remember her name right now. She was a terrible, terrible woman.

From the beginning, Howard Hollis had had a running battle with William [M.] Milliken all the time I was there [at the Cleveland Museum of Art]. He was the kind of person that kind of got obsessed with something and he would look for problems. He was there first and I got there a week or two later. But by the time I got there, already he was having problems with Colonel Nugent and his captain assistant. It gradually got so that was all he was doing, and he wanted to stay in the office to make sure that he could carry on this fight. So I was sort of the senior officer. The fieldwork was largely mine. Captain Popham loved to go to places where there were parks or gardens. That was his interest especially. Charles Gallagher would go anywhere. He was very good and very helpful.

I knew nothing about Japanese art, except I read a few books, because you couldn't see collections just before or during the war and so forth. So I wanted to see everything that I possibly could. But first I had to get ready for my family to come. I went looking for a house.



And all the people who went looking for houses all wanted to get the biggest, most lavish Japanese house that they could. With a big house came lots of servants. Unbelievable. That's how they fed a lot of the Japanese. But also every day--I got there in September; in October it began to get cold--a house would burn down, because Americans liked things too hot. There was no central heating. They had electric heaters everywhere, and if an electric heater didn't give them enough heat or it blew out a fuse, they would fix the fuse by just wrapping copper wire around it until it worked. And then the next day or the day after or the day after that, something in the house would go. You had this constant flood of officers and families moving from houses back into the Imperial Hotel, or a hotel, and then out again into another house. I said to myself, "Now, this is really very silly. We want something that is easy to take care of and we want something that we can easily keep warm. We don't want anything big." And I found a little house, Western style with one Japanese room, in Aoyama Takagicho, not far from the Red Cross hospital.

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TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

APRIL 8, 1992

GARDNER: You were describing your exposure--

LEE: My house. It was perfect. It had a wall around it. So I signed up for that house. Then in December I got a Christmas tree and had it up and everything. I had everything ready. It turned out they weren't going to get there by Christmas. And then they were going to arrive, I remember, the very beginning of January, the first few days in January. It was cold. I went down with flowers to wait for the Marine Falcon to dock. I expected to see them come bouncing down the gangway and so forth. Everybody was coming down, coming down. I looked up and there was my wife up there. She said, "Come this way." So I went up and both kids were in bed. They'd gotten in a storm and they had a terrible crossing. The ship's doctor was selling liquor to the crew. Everybody was sick, seasick. They had to send a helicopter and a boat out to lower medical supplies and so on to the Marine Falcon. I had the great pleasure of greeting my family.

Fortunately Ruth was reasonably well, but both kids were ill. They went directly off the boat into an ambulance and into the hospital. By this time the Christmas tree had lost all its needles and it looked very



pathetic. Well, Katharine [Lee] recovered very quickly and she was able to come home within a day or two. But Margaret was there for a week or ten days. She had a flu bug and she would not cooperate with anyone. She would just stand in her crib and scream for twenty-four hours a day.

Anyhow, we finally got through that. We got into our house, and it worked out perfectly. We had a housekeeper, two lady servants, and a driver who was, as I describe him accurately, a failed kamikaze pilot. We began living there, and it worked out beautifully. Across the street was the house of one of the members of the imperial family with big grounds. Their housekeeper's children and our children and some other children had a ball. And the kids picked up Japanese just like that, you know. They had a wonderful time.

GARDNER: And you learned Japanese too at this point, I gather?

LEE: Not really. I learned barely enough to get around. [tape recorder off] As soon as I got there, we decided we'd make a state visit to the great center of the early art of Japan, which is Nara, where all the great--almost all the great--early eighth-century temples and sculptures-- And the Nara National Museum is there and the

Shosoin [Imperial Treasure House]. The visit was absolutely essential in protecting and preserving cultural property, because if you let the occupying troops do what they would, they'd take souvenirs, they'd ruin the temples, the gardens, and so forth. The army, almost immediately when they arrived, placed certain places offlimits. We had the right to put anything that we wanted to off limits. So we really had to have the cooperation of the military governor of each prefecture, and especially Nara prefecture would be the most important one in all Japan.

So we got on the train and went down, Howard and I, to Kyoto and then took a day-- We had a jeep and a driver, and he took us to Nara. The train from Tokyo to Kyoto took-- You left at about nine o'clock at night and you arrived at eight in the morning. Now, on the fast train it's three hours, but then it was a coal-driven locomotive. It went through lots of tunnels, and when you got out you were black. We arrived in Kyoto and got the jeep and went down to Nara, where our agent and our Japanese representative for Nara prefecture was Osamu Takata, a specialist in Indian art, a very, very fine man and later a very famous scholar. He's now dead. He met us with the military governor of Nara prefecture,



Lieutenant Colonel Roland Henderson, U.S. cavalry-- "Swede" Henderson. He was a great big sort of gaunt guy with huge hands. He was a very rough-and-ready type. He looked at us as being art boys. He was a military man, and we could see that there was sort of an arm's length relationship.

We introduced ourselves and we were taken to the barracks. They had commandeered a big Japanese pavilion house on the lake in Nara and we had quarters in there. This is where the officers club was. By that time-- You see, we got in about eight or nine o'clock. We had the jeep and so-- The train today from Kyoto to Nara takes about forty-five minutes. We got there about three in the afternoon, because the roads were all totally disrupted. Some of the areas had been bombed. So we got there sort of mid-afternoon. It was too late to do anything. Colonel Henderson said, in any case, he'd set up a schedule for us and we were to be received by the abbot of Todai-ji the next morning at nine o'clock for inspection of the temples and the registered objects in the temple collection.

So that night he asked us if we'd like to have cocktails. We had cocktails and then we had dinner. Then they had an entertainment which was for all the officers.



We were invited too. It was sort of a helter-skelter-- Japanese girls dancing and doing stripteases, bad jazz music and everything, and lots of drinking. As the night wore on, Colonel Henderson perceived that we were not just art boys. As Colonel Henderson warmed up under the influence of alcohol and everybody was having a good time, everything was just going very, very well.

The next morning we all had terrible, terrible hangovers--just terrible. It must have smelled like a distillery--all of us. Swede was in his uniform, all dolled up in his ribbons, and we were just up, but we were really in sad shape. Nine o'clock, there we were at the temple. The abbot in his purple robe received us, and we went through the ceremony and tea and then spent all day looking at the temple and objects and so on. We got a list of requests from the abbot about things that needed to be done, and Takata-san told us a few things about certain areas where the buildings were in very bad repair and needed attention.

Swede didn't stay with us all day, but the next evening we had cocktails again. Swede had decided that we were okay. It was very, very important because Nara prefecture had the majority of the great early monuments. From that day on, Nara prefecture was ours. When we

arrived in Nara prefecture, Swede put at our disposal-- We had a jeep and a driver, what we called "the glass house," which was an old Pierce Arrow limousine, which was the official vehicle for the Japanese governor of Nara prefecture. That was ours. So we'd go tooling around the countryside, having a hell of a time getting through these villages with this huge Pierce Arrow. But it was very impressive, and everybody did everything they could to help us out. We made our inspection--I think we were down there for about four days--and from that time on, anything we wanted, anything we wanted done, any pressure on the local prefectural treasurer to make funds available for architectural reconstruction and so forth, we got it. It was being sort of roughneck types--we were able to get a lot, I dare say, that some others might not have gotten. That was our introduction to military governorship in Japan.

Howard became more and more involved in his internecine war with Colonel Nugent and Captain what's her name. So I did most of the inspecting and big trips. I got to know every major temple, every major collection, all the registered objects everywhere. Also, Howard and I met on a monthly basis with the Ministry of Education, with the people responsible for cultural property, and a



representative from the treasury department, in which we looked through all the budget requests and requests for emergency things. Our job actually was to act as spokesmen, pleading for the Japanese responsible for the protection of cultural property to see that they got a fair shake with the treasury that didn't want to give them a nickel. We would cajole, bully, and do everything we could to see that some degree of justice was done for the arts and monuments activities in Japan. We went to all the openings of the art exhibitions in Tokyo. We had nothing to do with the sword situation. Some Japanese swords were registered art objects. Japanese swords were under the jurisdiction, direct jurisdiction, of the army, because they were considered weapons. That was good because that's a nightmare to try to figure that all out.

In the course of this I got to know a lot of people. The interpreter for the ministry of education was Bunsaku Kurata, who later became a leading Japanese scholar, director of the Nara National Museum, and a good friend of mine. We also got to know, in the course of examining private collections, some of the big old daimyo family collections and collectors, like Marquis [Moritatsu] Hosokawa and Marquis [Saburo] Inouye and Baron [Taro] Masuda and Mr. [Tomitaro] Hara in Yokohama and Mr.

Matsunaga, all kinds of collectors everywhere. We also got to know a lot of the dealers, because some of them owned objects that were registered. Also, on Saturdays and Sundays we had the day off, of course. We'd go around and look at the dealers and see what was there, and if we could afford anything and it wasn't a registered object of course, we might buy something. I built a small collection of Sung slip decorated stoneware called Tz'u-chou ware, which was a pleasure to do.

Howard and I were very friendly with Hara in Yokohama and the Masudas, particularly with the young [Yoshinobu] Masuda, who was a painter and later became president of the Japan art association. We just saw so much that nobody else had seen. Howard found that he couldn't get his family over because he hadn't served during the war, so he had no points. He got increasingly morose. Combined with his battle with Colonel Nugent, he finally decided to go back. He left in, I think, June of '47. They made me officer in charge. They didn't bump me to the actual title, but they made me officer in charge of the operation, and we kept on until we came home in June of '48.

GARDNER: The purpose of it was to make sure that none of the treasuries got looted?



LEE: No. There were several things that happened very specifically that indicated the major problems and also the extraordinary measures that might be taken to deal with them. We got a complaint very early, not long after I got there, from the civilian representative of the diplomatic corps, Damon Gifford--he was in the foreign service in Korea--about Americans who had moved in there, because Japan had been kicked out, to protect Koreans. At that time North Korea was no big problem. They were there as an occupying force to let the Koreans come back into the political world. But, according to this informant, who had sent a protest to general headquarters, the army was endangering Korean cultural property in the Korean capital, especially stone monuments in the Duksu Palace enclosure.

We got a chit down from headquarters saying that somebody from our office had to go to Korea and make an inspection and report after the inspection first to the commanding officer of the army in Korea, who was General [Luther] Hodges, and then to the military governor of the Seoul area, who was General Lerch. So Howard said, "You go." I got a ride on General Hodges's plane, which was a bucket seat B-29 and went to Seoul, right around Christmastime. This is when I knew that the family was



not yet going to be on time--they weren't coming until January. I was there for about five days, in Seoul and around. I met the director of the Korean National Museum and became a very good friend of his--Chewon Kim. His daughter stayed with us quite a bit when she was studying at Harvard [University] later on.

Indeed, the army was routing trucks through the compound, and you could see things knocked off the sides of some of the stone pagodas and so forth. The museum was closed. It was in pitiful shape. They had no heat whatsoever; it was as cold as a barn. Everything was really a mess. So I wrote a very strong report and reported to General Lerch's office. Hodges I didn't see. Lerch I did. I gave him a copy of the report and he seemed rather upset. I said, "Well, General, I can only report what I have actually seen. I think this is very bad, and it's going to reflect on the American army. It's really very unfair to the Koreans, and it can be prevented very easily by just not using this enclosure with trucks." And he said they'd see what they could do. But he made no commitments and was not very cooperative.

I went back to Tokyo and gave my report to general headquarters. I later heard from Gifford, the man in the foreign services who had complained, that they had indeed



made the Duksu Palace area off limits and had stopped the more obvious things. We got continual reports and rumors from Korea about a lot of artistic looting. Not registered material, not things that were in the museum. That was in terrible shape, but enclosed and protected. But there was a clear distinction between Korea, which was a military government, and Japan, which was under GHQ [general headquarters] and was a kind of military government, but it was set up with different departments and ministries, or sections, which corresponded to the ministries in Japan. It was clearly a long-term government, interlocking thing. In Korea the army was there and everybody else had to just watch out. That was very illuminating.

Then in the fall of 1947, there had been a constant stream of complaints from the Chinese mission, which was the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang, then representing China-- Constant complaints from the Chinese that the Japanese had looted important Chinese art from the mainland and that they were hidden in imperial locations, including the Shosoin. Basically, it's almost a hundred percent ludicrous on the face of it. But they were very persistent, and finally I got a direct order from GHQ-- from General [Courtney] Whitney, acting on orders directly



from [Douglas] MacArthur--that I was to make an inspection of the imperial repository in Nara, the Shosoin, as soon as was convenient. Now, do you know about the Shosoin?

GARDNER: Tell me.

LEE: The Shosoin is an imperial repository. It's a huge log building divided in three sections. It was built in 756 A.D. to house all the works of art and goods in the imperial household of the late emperor Shomu, who died in 753. It was given as an offering to the Buddha at Todai-ji, the great Buddha which the emperor Shomu had caused to be built. It had been in there ever since that time, undisturbed, complete, thousands of objects. It was one of the great wonders of Japan.

It was never even looked at before the Meiji era. But after Meiji there was a growth of interest in ancient art in Japan. With the development of the national treasure system and the cultural property protection section of the Ministry of Education, it had become a great, great treasure. It belonged to the imperial household, the emperor's property, but housed in the original storehouse at Todai-ji. And gradually after World War I, the practice began-- They always aired the Shosoin, in order to let fresh air circulate through, in the fall for a period of a week, and the practice grew up



of inviting distinguished heads of state--diplomats, whoever, but very high people, the highest in the hierarchy--to the fall opening to view what was available in the interior. There were shelves and shelves and boxes and boxes. But they'd get out a few pieces, and that was an absolute-- Anybody who was interested in art would give their eyeteeth to do that, but very few people got in. Sir Percival David and people like that, the British ambassador, went together in '34 I think it was. But it was sacrosanct. The Japanese never saw it. The ordinary Japanese people--or even art people, professors and so on-- never saw it. There was a catalog published, black and white illustrations, some color.

But I got the order I was supposed to inspect the Shosoin. I then went to the Ministry of Education and said, "I got this order. I know and you know exactly what the problems are, and I know and you know that the Chinese are just making trouble and that there ain't anything in there that is looted. There are a lot of Chinese objects there, but they're eighth century and they've been there ever since the eighth century. But let's get on with it. I certainly am going to be delighted to make the inspection, because it will be the first time in a lifetime that anything like this has ever happened." So



they understood.

They never had allowed any electrical stuff in the Shosoin. When they had the openings, it was just the natural light which happened to filter in from the three doors of the three sections. So Swede Henderson got a big army truck with a generator; we got a big army truck with a generator. We got a whole battery of lights and things. Some of the Japanese couldn't wait to cozy up and get in on the act. I had Professor [Rikichiro] Fukui, the great scholar from Tokyo University, and I made sure our friend Osamu Takata, our inspector in Nara, got included, and there were other people. So we had an inspection, and not for just one day. I had three days in the Shosoin, ten hours a day, with lights. This was a miracle of all miracles.

I encouraged them. I said, "Now that this has happened, which sort of marks a change--" I encouraged them to have an exhibition of the Shosoin material for the public. They were keen to do it too, as part of the general trying to rebuild some degree of pride and also rebuild the image of the emperor and the imperial household. I think I inspected that thing in early October. Shortly after that--I think it was late October or early November--they had the first public showing of a



selection of some thirty objects from the Shosoin in the Nara National Museum. Since that time they've done it every year. They've even had one or two showings in Tokyo. They select thirty or forty objects. The Nara railroad station is approximately three miles downhill, west of the center of town and of the museum. I think the exhibition was opened for three weeks. Every day there was a double or triple or quadruple line of people stretching from the Nara museum down to the railroad station--three miles long--shuffling through this exhibition. It was unbelievable.

Now, that comes in with the heading of both protection of cultural property and getting the Chinese off the backs of Japanese. The Chinese followed that debacle by having a showing at their own embassy of some stuff they dug up that they claimed was looted Chinese cultural property. It was the most awful bunch of late jade screens and real sort of rich Chinese taste, which didn't convince anybody about anything. But that shows that positive side.

One other positive thing, in terms of the democratization program, was we encouraged very definitely--it was our prodding--Professor Fukui to agree to head a committee of Japanese scholars to produce an

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exhibition in the Osaka area of Chinese and Japanese works of arts from private collections. They had never been seen, a lot of them. The Hakutsuru Museum, a private museum which is one of the best private museums in the area, agreed to show and to be the venue for the exhibition. Fukui took charge and had a few people to help him. He was a very prestigious figure. He was an older gentleman, and that gave it a stamp of panache that it needed. They had this exhibition and it was a big success, with a catalog. And again, crowds and crowds of people came. Since that time, the holding of exhibitions and the opening of private museums and the holding of private as well as public exhibitions has increased--along with the rest of the world--in Japan a great deal. Before the war there weren't that many real special exhibitions, except at a place like the Tokyo exhibition hall or occasionally at the national museums. But now it's a regular practice. That exhibition, I think, was certainly the first of any of the material of the Osaka region. It included national treasures and important art objects and lots of things like that. So that was another sort of positive step for the democratization program.

GARDNER: Were you in touch with the people who were doing the same thing in Europe?



LEE: Not much. The Japan office that Howard went to, as the first officer in charge of arts and monuments in Japan, was set up by three art scholars. Two of them had been in the European theater and had been in the Arts and Monuments [Division], which was a military organization in Europe. They were all officers, not regular, but reserve. They came to Japan right after the occupation began, inspected the situation in Tokyo, and advised on a setup and staffing for an arts and monuments section in Japan. It was George [L.] Stout, who was a conservator for the Fogg [Art] Museum, and I think he was a captain in the army, and Tommy [Thomas C.] Howe, who had been one of the officers with the European Arts and Monuments Division, and then Laurence Sickman, who was then the curator of oriental art in Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City. He had been stationed in Chungking and the other town where we had air force bases in southwest China, Kunming. Larry knew Chinese art very, very well and certainly something about Japanese art. They made the arrangement of the organizational setup of the Tokyo, Japan, office.

I think Larry would have been the first head of that office, but my understanding is that he said that he didn't want to do it. He was not terribly interested in



Japanese art first of all, and he wanted to get back to Kansas City and so on. He suggested Howard Hollis. So that's how Howard happened to get taken into it. It was a continuing program of checking and helping and doing what we could with a very small American force. After Howard left, there were two inspectors, myself--that's three--and one secretary. We had the two Japanese-- Very small, as was the religion section, which was right next door to us. They had charge of the dismantling of the state Shinto system, among other things.

It was a lot to do, but it was an absolute one chance in a hundred years or more. I'm sure I'm right in saying that I was able in that two-year stretch to see more original Japanese works of art, especially registered, important materials--Chinese or Japanese and Korean--than anybody ever has before or since, simply because of that position I had. If I wanted to see something, all I had to do was call down to our Japanese representative in a prefecture and say, "Set up a meeting at such and such a time. I'm going to inspect registered objects at so and so and so." And there they were all laid out for us when we got there. Of course our Japanese inspectors were usually scholars or museum people, and they were delighted, because they hadn't seen this material either.



Before the war, the old art materials were really in the control of the upper, upper strata. The ordinary people didn't get a chance to see anything. Even scholars would become experts in the field without having seen some of the most important things in the field. So they were keen on doing this too. There was no way anyone could see all this material. And I was educated. I knew a lot more about Chinese art and Indian art when I went to Japan than I did about Japanese art. I knew very little about Japanese art. But I really worked at it, and I can say that I was pretty well educated on the subject by the time I got out. A two-year seminar with all of Japan as your laboratory-- I should have paid the government for the opportunity.

GARDNER: Did you ever compare notes later with some of the people who were in Europe?

LEE: When the Association of Art Museum Directors would meet, of course, there were people like Tommy Howe and Jim [James J.] Rorimer and George Stout. There were at least fifteen or twenty well-known American scholars who were either in universities or in museums who had been in the European operation. The Nazis had a systematic looting system, and that meant lots of work and lots of trouble. The Japanese did not, and it was a much smaller operation.



Also the Japanese, in general, take very good care of their registered material. Of course the fact that the American military deliberately avoided the bombing of Kyoto and Nara meant that the vast proportion of the very early great material was not in serious harm or danger. That was not per se true, certainly in the Tokyo area or Nagoya area. So that helped cut it down. Plus, Europe is a much bigger area and involved many more countries and more objects too. So the office was much smaller in Japan than it was in the big military operation in Europe.

Now, the third or fourth example that I want to cite specifically, which is a tragic one, but one I think deserves to be in the record-- It's already going to be in the record in an article being written by someone else, who interviewed me for the magazine Orientations, at some point in the not too distant future. But one of the things that was going on when we arrived in Japan, at the most important single site in all Japan-- The seventh-century temple complex at Horyuji, the earliest complete wooden buildings in the world, also with dozens of great early sculptures and hundreds of other objects and great things. It has the same status as the Vatican collection or something like that. And in the Golden Hall, the main building--seventh century--there are on the walls

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then proceeds to discuss the various factors that have shaped the development of the United States, including the role of the individual, the influence of the environment, and the impact of the government. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for a balanced and objective approach to the study of history.

The second part of the paper is a detailed analysis of the role of the individual in the development of the United States. The author argues that the individual is the primary agent of change, and that the actions of individuals have shaped the course of the nation's history. This argument is supported by a number of examples, including the lives of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The author also discusses the concept of the "great man" theory of history, and argues that it is a flawed and oversimplified view of the past.

The third part of the paper discusses the influence of the environment on the development of the United States. The author argues that the physical characteristics of the land, such as the availability of natural resources and the climate, have played a significant role in shaping the nation's history. This argument is supported by a number of examples, including the role of the Mississippi River in the development of the Midwest, and the impact of the California Gold Rush on the development of the West.

The fourth part of the paper discusses the impact of the government on the development of the United States. The author argues that the government has played a central role in shaping the nation's history, and that its actions have had a profound impact on the lives of its citizens. This argument is supported by a number of examples, including the role of the federal government in the development of the infrastructure, and the impact of the New Deal on the lives of the poor.

The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for a balanced and objective approach to the study of history. The author argues that history should be studied not just for the sake of knowledge, but also for the sake of understanding the present and shaping the future. The author also emphasizes the importance of the individual in the development of the United States, and argues that the actions of individuals have shaped the course of the nation's history.

paintings dating from about 710 [A.D.] which are world famous. The Ministry of Education had employed a group of Japanese artists to make copies of the wall paintings. They had taken the sculptures off the altar platform and moved them to the warehouse and had moved in electric lights and facilities for the artists, and this team was doing the copies, basically one artist per wall unit. There were a lot of lights and wires and so forth. The artists in the wintertime were very cold. There was no heat, except that they had heat pads for their little platforms that they knelt on and sat on while they were painting this thing in front of them. They also had a couple of hot plates for heating tea, which was absolutely de rigueur. You can't live in Japan without tea.

I got more and more nervous about all this stuff going on and I kept thinking about the houses in Tokyo burning--the modern wooden houses. So finally, all on my own, I just went down there and I went over everything and I watched everybody and I made a chart up. They'd all started at the same time, sometime before we arrived, in mid '46 I think. And yet one man was 90 percent done. Another man 80 percent done. I had them all charted out. One was only 15 percent done, and most of them were less than half done. I talked a little bit to a couple of the

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J. B. BARNES, 1780

artists, and I talked to my friend Takata especially. He said that this was a Japanese WPA [Works Progress Administration] project. Some of them were working hard and some of the others were not.

So finally I drew up a memo--I remember it was two pages--and I sent it to Colonel Nugent just before I left in June of 1948. Now, my successor was James Marshall Plumer, my professor from Michigan, who was still a mysterious-East-type Coomaraswamyite. I had long since passed-- I wasn't doing that anymore. I sent a memo to Colonel Nugent with a copy for the file. I said, "I strongly urge that the work on the copies being made of the frescoes in Horyuji be pushed by pressure, heavy pressure, from both this division and from the Ministry of Education, so that work is completed, by the latest, in--" I'm not exactly sure about all this chronology. I left in June '48, and I think I gave the time limit as January 1, 1949. That gave them six months, from June 1, to complete the job. But the whole place burned down in February of '49. The frescoes were almost totally destroyed. The Kondo [Golden Hall] was severely damaged but has since been restored and rebuilt in February of 1949.

GARDNER: Oh, dear. And they hadn't finished it?

LEE: Of course they hadn't finished--they were still there.



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LEE: Jim [James Marshall Plumer] was very inclined, very much in sympathy with, and mixed up with the Mingei folk art movement in Japan. Its leader was Soetsu Yanagi. We may have had our faults. We were sympathetic to the Japanese certainly, but we did try to be objective and tried to see that everything was done fairly with sort of equal time for all parties. Jim was inclined to think the Japanese knew better how to do things than we would, which in many things maybe they do. But I don't think that enough pressure was brought to bear. It should have been brought to bear, and I feel, just as a matter of historical accuracy and on the record, that we have to recognize that there is some American responsibility for the tragic events of February '49. It's all water over the dam, but-- The Japanese were responsible in the sense that they continued to permit those artists to do that and to have unsafe electrical conditions. The fire was determined to have originated in a heating element of a heating pad in one of the artist's platforms. But there is a degree of American responsibility, because they didn't press hard enough to accomplish the stated purpose of that memorandum.



GARDNER: Is the article that's being done strictly on that event?

LEE: No. It's just part of a general article by friends of ours in Japan, Professor [Howard] Rogers and his wife Mary Anne [Rogers]. She did an interview with me two years ago in Kamakura, generally, just about Japan. That's one of the things that I think is going to be in that. I don't know, we'll see.

Other significant things-- Oh, for instance, as I told you, we--Charles Gallagher and Captain [Alfred] Popham and I and a lot of other people, friends of ours who were in the government section who were interested in Japanese art--collected in a modest way while we were in Japan, being careful to avoid anything that was in any way official or registered. On two occasions where I discovered or found a piece and where I was requested by a museum-- In the case of one I found a very nice red and green Tz'u-chou piece in Osaka. Yukio Yashiro was the dean of all the Japanese art historians and had studied under [Bernard] Berenson in Italy and had written a book on Botticelli. He was a good friend of ours. He said he would love to have that piece for the new museum he was developing outside of Nara for the Nippon Kinki Railroad. I said, "Take it, it's yours. Just give me what I paid for it and you can have it." And another case there was a

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piece I bought up in Tokyo. It was a marvelous, very important Chinese celadon. I traded in a lot of the painted wares I had gotten in order to get it because I thought it was so wonderful. Ten days after I bought it, the dealer I bought it from--who I still know; he is still alive--called me up and said the Tokyo National Museum was kind of upset, that they wished they could have had that piece, though they hadn't seen it first. I said, "Let them have it. Just give me back the stuff I traded. Let them have it. I don't want to take anything that they want." But it was fun on Saturdays and Sundays to go around to the different dealers and see what was on the market. Some of the Japanese were collecting too. Everything was very inexpensive everywhere then, but especially in Japan.

At the same time I got to be very good friends with one dealer whose name was [Inosuke] Setsu. He had barely any English. I had very little Japanese. But we communicated pretty well. I used to visit him every Saturday in his little place down not far from Ginza. He would show me stuff and tell me about it and explain techniques and so on. He was a very, very knowledgeable man. He had a wonderful collection of his own of early material, and I learned an awful lot from him. We tried to save his first son, who had a big illness. We were



able to get some drugs flown in from the states for us and helped him and he was very, very, very grateful. His other son has become his successor and is a big dealer in Tokyo now and we know them very well. We've always had a good time with them.

So we were able to both get many, many friends and we also were able to learn an awful lot. I think the proof of the pudding-- We left Japan in '48 and went to Seattle, and Ruth [Ward Lee] and I didn't go back to Japan until, I don't know, the mid or late fifties. My first trip when I got to [the] Cleveland [Museum of Art] in '52 that took me outside of the United States was in '53 to Europe. My first trip to Europe, which they let me do, paid for my way. I had to go by myself, because Ruth had another child. Just before that she had three daughters to take care of. We went back together in I think it was '60. We landed at Haneda, because they didn't have the new airport, Narita. We had left in '48. All our friends then had no cars and they were scrambling around. We arrived in Haneda, and there were about fifteen or sixteen cars. Big cars. And there were the Masudas and the Setsus and the Haras and the Hirotas, Yashiro, [Osamu] Takata. They were all there at an ungodly hour, too; it was very early in the morning. And we couldn't pick any one person. There was no way we could say who we were

going to ride into town with. Fortunately, my friend Yuji Abe had been to Cleveland a couple of times before. He is a mounter, mounts paintings. His grandfather and his father worked for the imperial household mounting paintings, and he also is a leading dealer in contemporary Japanese prints. He had a little car there and he was alone, and so we went with him. We said, "He's very close to us, to where we're going." But we've always kept up a very good, firm relationship with almost all of them. They gradually have been passing away, but we still look upon them as our best friends.

GARDNER: Well, I guess now you move on to Seattle.

LEE: Well, the link between Japan and Seattle is very easy to make and is very spectacular. Dick [Richard Fuller] sent me a letter and a check about a month and a half or two months before we were to leave to go to Seattle. He said, "Here's some money." It was \$5,000, a check for \$5,000. He said, "Here's some money. Spend it as you wish. See what you come back with for the museum." So I did. I went to all my dealer friends and said, "Seattle Art Museum wants to do something. I've got some money. Let's see what we can do." We were able to get for the Seattle Art Museum on the open art market in Japan-- One or two pieces I bought from private collectors that I knew, and they were sold through the dealer who

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TO THE PRESENT TIME
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shipped everything, Junkichi Mayuyama. But they were almost all from the open market. There were, I think, eleven or maybe twelve pieces in all. Five thousand dollars. There was a ninth-century wood sculpture of Bishamonten, which is quite famous in Japan, not registered, from the Masuda collection and five feet high; a section of a famous late twelfth-century handscroll of the scenes of hell, Jigoku Zoshi (subsequently, the remains of that were registered), one of three known rolls, which had been cut up by the owner; a section of another scroll dated 1278, the Kitano Tenjin Engi; the section of another scroll showing a battle scene of the thirteenth century; a section of another scroll of the life of Priest Honen, also thirteenth century; a Chinese gilt bronze figure of a bodhisattva dated 485 A.D.; a small gilt bronze altarpiece with Amitaba in the center and two figures and guardians, a six- or seven-figure altarpiece, T'ang Dynasty; a Chinese porcelain, blue and white, what is called a "pilgrim-flask shape," marked in the reign of Hsüan-Te, early fifteenth century, Ming dynasty; a small, early Chinese bronze figure of a dragon woman, dating from the fourth century B.C. And I think maybe that's it. That was all for \$5,000. One turned out to be a fake.

GARDNER: Which--?



LEE: The dragon woman. It was recommended by the greatest Japanese scholar in the field, Sueji Umehara. When I got it to Seattle and began to look at it carefully with a view to publishing an article on it, I began to get worried, and I finally scratched it and took it apart. The head was genuine, the dragon was genuine, but from a belt buckle. The rest of it was made up. And the proof of it was twofold: one, there was sand inside it to give it weight because it was hollow. The construction was hollow. And there were fragments of a Shanghai newspaper inside too, which had been used as a sort of stuffing to keep the sand in place before they covered it. Umehara refused to admit it was wrong until finally I sent, through Mayuyama, a letter with photographs of the newspaper and the sand and so forth. And I said, "If you don't at least confirm that this is wrong--I don't blame anyone; I just want you to recognize this is wrong--I'm going to publish this in a Japanese newspaper." And he sent a nice letter and one to Mayuyama saying the piece was wrong and so forth. But everything else has just been-- And I mean, today-- There were four or five of those--any one of them would today cost as much as a half a million or even a million dollars. It was just a unique time.

Dick, of course, was delighted. It made a point that



now this was going to be a wonderful time to try to do something more about Far Eastern art at the Seattle Art Museum. So when we went back, Dick had picked out a house for us. See, I asked him to get us something so we wouldn't have to live in a hotel or something. I explained, and of course dear Dick-- He was a great friend of ours, but he was not terribly practical. He got us a corner house right near the museum and on a street that all the young, upbeat, upscale socialites were living on. You could stand on a staircase--this ladder going up into the attic--and look out and you could see Mount Rainier beneath the cracks that were there. I mean, it was pretty much totally uninsulated. It was small but it was pretty good, and it was all right. Dick was very sweet to arrange to get it there. We paid for it over a period of time, and we really were settled in and it was a unique situation.

But the thing about the opportunity for Seattle was that there was one head, Dick Fuller, one supplier of money, Dick Fuller, and we could act immediately, within minutes, if we wanted to. We also had a couple of trustees: Emma Stimson, who was a great friend of ours and whose husband [Thomas Stimson] had been killed in a plane crash some years before. Lumber business. And there was Mrs. Frederick, whose husband [Donald E.



Frederick] had been president of Frederick and Nelson, the biggest department store in Seattle. And he died. His widow lived out in the Highlands, which was the place for anyone with a lot of money to live. There was Norman Davis, who was a brewer, a very, very nice man who was interested in classical art. There were a lot of interesting people. There was Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Guy Anderson, Kenneth Callahan, who we knew very well--all painters. So it was a very sympathetic place to be. Dick had a couple of dealer friends. One was a man named Kleikamp who was originally from Holland. And then there was the Indian dealer in New York, [Nasli] Heeramaneck. Both Kleikamp and Heeramaneck were always short of money at the end of the year and they would come fly out or take the train out to Seattle with a suitcase full of stuff. And Dick would say, "I'll take this and this" and "How much can you give me?" So it was a very active place. Dick was an insatiable collector. We just started making hay as fast as we could.

GARDNER: What was he like?

LEE: Dick was average height. A dolichocephalic skull--very, very round--and bald on top. He was a geologist, Ph.D. in geology. Distinguished geologist. He was chairman of the geological committee that studied that volcano that erupted outside of Mexico City while we were



there. I forget the name of it. [Paricutin] He was very absentminded. When he was in deep thought or in a state of some annoyance, he had a habit of humming in a very piercing kind of drone. He was a very sweet man. He didn't get married until shortly before we left in '52. He was a bachelor and lived with his mother at a house not far from where we lived, very close to the museum. She was Scotch and her name was Margaret [McTavish] Fuller. She was called "M. E." Always called "M. E." for her initials. She was very short, white hair, tiny, tiny figure, and always sat with a little footstool--she was so small--whether she was seated at the table or whether she was seated in the living room. She liked collecting too. Her husband had been a medical doctor in Philadelphia.

GARDNER: Oh, really?

LEE: He had made great success and he invested well, I gather. And he had been to Japan. He took his son Dick and M. E. I think they went to Japan before World War I. Is that possible? Let's see. Dick, in '48, would have been about fifty-two or so. That would take him back to an 1898 birth. Yes. So that would be just before World War I. Dick had contracted appendicitis on the way to Nikko and was operated on by his brother in a factory hospital room or factory medical room on the route up to Nikko and fortunately survived. But they were interested



in the Orient from the beginning.

Dick, because of his geological training, had first collected snuff bottles, small jades, some inro and netsuke. But small objects. And then had branched out from that into porcelains and then into stonewares, ceramics, and gradually into sculptures and so forth, and had built a very good oriental collection. He was interested also in ancient art, Persian art, that kind of thing. He was not much interested in European art, in part because he thought it was too expensive and in part because the emphasis in European art has always been on the so-called "fine arts" and he was much more object oriented. They made a wonderful combination. We went to their house many, many times for dinner and went to quite a few things together. Dick always had martinis, as I do, before dinner. He made very good ones and he made a lot of them. At dinner, we always had some kind of soup first, usually a clear soup or something like that, and M. E. would put in the sherry. She would just ladle it in. I've never seen anyone put so much sherry in soup in my life. She was very bright, very chipper, and she was well into her seventies, I think, when we first went there. She died in her late eighties. She could be irascible, but we got along fine.

Emma Stimson paid for some of the things in the group



of things that I bought in Japan for them, and she later bought other things. She had a very good eye. She was just marvelous. It was a very nice place to be. It's great outdoor country, and I hadn't had much chance in the last ten or twelve years to do any of my fishing business. GARDNER: Well, I'm surprised that you didn't go fishing in Japan.

LEE: I did. Oh, I did! I forgot. I went fishing on the emperor's trout stream up near Nikko, which was a very interesting experience. Very good fishing too.

The curator at the museum was the painter Kenneth Callahan. The museum was very informally run. Dick was there and I was there. If we were going to change the gallery, move sculpture, do anything, Dick and I would go up-- Dick loved to wrestle with heavy sculptures. He made a point of honor to try to get the heaviest ones. Oh, yes. We had no guards. There were no guards in the museum. If we were going to change a gallery or have an exhibition, we all went up and pitched in. It was just like a family affair. I was the only professional person on the staff. We had Kenneth Callahan as curator. There was another artist who acted as an assistant. There was a very nice superintendent, Mr. Faris, and an assistant superintendent, Mr. Hazlitt, who later became superintendent. They were good carpenters. We did it



all, did everything ourselves. It was very good training because, if you get the idea, you go to a big museum and everything is done sort of by the book and done by "utility men." You don't get the kind of experience and direct knowledge that I think is necessary or at least useful.

Kenneth Callahan had a place up on the Stillaguamish River in the mountains, a log cabin. He and his family went up there all the time, and during the summer, he was up there continuously. We went up there off and on. There was an old man who owned twenty acres--that's a quarter of a section--just a little bit above the Callahans' on the Stillaguamish River. And twenty acres could be bought for \$1,000, so I bought it. We bought twenty acres and we owned-- Almost all the twenty acres was on one side of the Stillaguamish River, but it crossed the Stillaguamish, so we had fishing rights.

GARDNER: Your very own place to stand.

LEE: My very own trout stream. That was a good, good river. And I built, with my own two hands and the help of my wife and my two children--three children then--a cabin. There was a cedar mill just a mile and a half away where we could get cut cedar for \$25 a thousand feet and we could get finished cedar for not much more. So we built a cedar-outside, board-and-batten cabin. Inside it was



smooth cedar, and Emma Stimson gave us oak flooring. So we had a beautiful oak floor. I got an expert in to build a fireplace because I didn't think I was up to that. I laid the lead pipe for the water from the spring down to the house, and we had a nifty place up there which we finished and began to use not long before we left. It was just very, very nice.

Dick was very upset that I didn't like to fly. I wouldn't fly and my wife wouldn't let me fly then. So twice a year I'd get the train, go to New York, and spend a week and go to dealers and so on. Twice a year, I'd drive down to San Francisco. There were some good dealers in oriental art down there, and also sometimes I saw [William R.] Valentiner down in Los Angeles, because there began to be a few dealers there. We really developed that collection. The four years I was there, we really made great headway and gave it a strength, particularly in painting and sculpture, that it had never had and added to its strength in ceramics and other things. The one thing, as I said, that they didn't have was European art.

The occasion arose to do something about both of these things, but it was a little bit like pulling teeth. Mrs. Frederick, who had paid for some of the nice oriental acquisitions, expressed the strong desire to have a memorial for her husband. She was quite religious, and I



suggested that the museum had nothing really important in medieval art and that maybe we could get a case of material together that would represent the best goldsmiths' work, enamel, and sculpture, and maybe even medieval textiles. I got together the material from Joe [Joseph] Brummer in New York, Arnold Seligman Rey, and one piece from Duveen [Brothers]. It all came to \$10,000. She was very keen about it, and she said okay, she'd do it. She came to the museum that day to pay for it so I could send the checks out to the different dealers. She came into the office and sat down, and she was so nervous and it was such an effort. It took her three attempts before she could get the checks right. The third check she finally got it right. The first two she made mistakes in the figure each time. So that gave us some medieval material.

Dikran Kelekian was the other dealer we got stuff from for the medieval group. One or two of the pieces may not have worked out over the years, but by and large, I think that it was a good group. The Gothic head from the collection was superb. Then I would scrounge around when I was in the East. I found a nice Italian baroque painting at Charlie Childs's in Boston which is by-- Would you hand me the Seattle [Art Museum] handbook? Charlie Childs had this very nice painting by Jacopo Amigoni of



Mercury and Argus, which is really a beauty, and it was, I think, \$200. And I got from Germain Seligman for the museum a very good Venetian view by Luca Carlevaris of the Riva degli Schiarone. That, I think, was \$1,800 or \$1,500. One could, in the late forties and early fifties, get very good baroque pictures for nothing. So those Dick would occasionally pay for so we could have the beginnings of a European painting collection. Oh, yes, there was a very nice G. M. Crespi from Schaeffer Galleries which was \$900. I remember that.

But then I suggested to Dick that maybe Seattle could qualify for a Kress [Foundation] collection of Italian paintings. He was very reluctant to agree to take it up, partly because he really was not interested in painting in general, European painting in particular. It was a strong degree of justifiable pride in what he had accomplished--the Fuller family had accomplished--in Seattle, and the idea of bringing in some commercial type like Mr. [Samuel H.] Kress from the East to make a big splash may not have appealed to him too much.

But I finally persuaded him to let me to try to do something about it, and I opened negotiations with the Kress people. At that time, Rush [H.] Kress was the principal and his partner, as it were, and really the executive for the Kress Foundation was Guy Emerson, who



lived down in Greenwich Village in New York. And the chief restorer for the Kress Foundation was Mario Modestini. A scholar who worked for the Kress Foundation was Suida, Wilhelm Suida, who was an old-fashioned European-type scholar, who knew Valentiner quite well, incidentally. His daughter, Bertina Suida, had married Bob [Robert L.] Manning, and he collected and was an expert in baroque painting. So basically, those were the people we were dealing with. I went to them saying that Seattle had nothing and I thought they could be a big help to us. They said they would try to help. I told them I'd like to be able to, in a fairly small compass--perhaps fifteen, plus or minus, works--be able to give people some idea of Italian painting from the trecento to the baroque.

Then time elapsed. They sent me a list of things. I knew some of these things from having looked at the National Gallery [of Art] and looked at some of the other Kress collections that had been given to different places. They sent me a list which was a very sorry list. Some of the collections they had given out I thought were very sorry collections.

So I wrote back, and the copy of the letter is still in the file in Seattle. I tried to be as diplomatic as possible, but I really said, "This isn't good enough."



Furthermore, I said, "I think it would be important to add a few pieces to what you already have, to buy a few pieces for the Seattle group that would give it a certain individuality and panache. For instance, the Paul Drey Gallery has-- You have a Tiepolo sketch of a ceiling. He [Paul Drey] has got the ceiling, which has been transferred from plaster to canvas and it's suffered a bit, but still, it's the ceiling and it's very good. It would be marvelous to have the sketch, which is not on your list, which we would like to have with the ceiling to make something special." And then I said, "There is no sculpture in this. I think that we ought to have some sculpture, and Germain Seligman has a very nice marble sculpture of a cupid which is attributed to Giovanni di Bologna. It's very good quality and very, very close to him at the least and they're not expensive."

Well, they fiddled and diddled around, and finally they did it. They let me come to their storage place, which was down in Pennsylvania at some estate where they had their operation. I went through their storage and all their paintings and made some new selections, and we got together a group. I think it was maybe nineteen or even twenty-five.

Dick was reasonably pleased, but we got the smallest gallery in the building to put this in, to shoehorn this



material in. It worked pretty well. The ceiling looked very well. We closed off the gallery and went to work and we put the ceiling up. We put a partition to get a little more wall hanging space, and we finally got it done.

The big day came when there was going to be the grand opening, and Rush Kress and Guy Emerson and Modestini came out. We had the opening and they looked at it and so forth, and then Dick had arranged, as a special treat, for a boat trip on Lake Washington. We all piled down there on the boat, and then Mr. Kress got me to one side and he said he thought the room was terrible: it was too crowded and he didn't like it at all. He thought he might just take the whole bunch of stuff away. I said, "Well, I sympathize, but you understand the difficulties that exist." He said he understood but he felt something had to be done. I said, "Well, let's not get this thing all in an uproar immediately. I would be very grateful if you would indicate that you think it's too small. But please try and make it in a way so that there's room for negotiation and for development. Because this museum is never going to have anything unless we get this to start it off with in the European field. And though I'm interested in oriental art, I know a lot about European art and I know they need it. This Northwest area just doesn't understand the great European tradition because



they haven't got any of it."

So they finally-- By that time, I was ready to go to Cleveland. Dick worked with the foundation very cleverly. He said, "Well, maybe if you put a few more things in, we could get a bigger room." Finally, they added some very good stuff. They added a Rubens sketch, they added a big baroque bronze group by Soldani, and it's a very, very creditable thing now. It's now installed in the new building in ample space, and in the old building in a gallery which was twice the size of the one that it originally had. So it worked out finally. But it was a real hair-raiser.

GARDNER: You came there as assistant director and were promoted at one point to associate director. Was there a change in responsibility, or is that just a promotion of--?

LEE: That was just an excuse for a pay raise.

GARDNER: Was there a notion that you were going to succeed Fuller at some point? Was that ever part of a--?

LEE: Never discussed. Never discussed. We got along perfectly. It was just like a father and son kind of relationship. But we never discussed it.

GARDNER: With the course of today's conversation, we bridged the gap from your being a graduate student to your being responsible for purchasing lots of different kinds of work. What sorts of criteria did you use in buying

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY
JOHN HUTCHINGS
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE
IN NEW ENGLAND
AND
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE
IN GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND
IN TWO VOLUMES
THE SECOND VOLUME
LONDON
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1797

things? And were they different for Asian and Western?

GARDNER: Well, I was taught by Howard [C.] Hollis and by some of the dealers that I came to know like Paul Mallon and Nasli Heeramaneck that the key thing was quality. I would agree with that, and I felt that basically. That was indeed what was taught at Harvard [University] and under Paul [J.] Sachs. And that's what everybody talked about in that generation in our museum. But the problem was I also had been taught by Tommy [Thomas] Munro about more objective and scientific ways of judging things, and I've been taught by anthropologists about context and so forth. Quality can be a very emotional thing. I mean, someone can just go into ecstasies about something and you look at it and you know it's a piece of rubbish. If you go see a dealer, a lot of dealers get terribly enthusiastic about something and try to convince you that it's a great work of art and you know it's not. So this all has to be reconciled and made into some kind of a reasonable standard. At that time I began to develop my ideas--which are not much different from a lot of other people's ideas, people I agree with, anyhow--that quality is indeed quality. There is such a thing as good, better, best, just as there is in athletics or sports, and it's important that you have quality. But quality exists in a context. It's quite pointless to try and compare the



quality of a Chinese painting with a Western painting and quite pointless to try and compare the aims of Greek sculpture with the aims of African sculpture. So that the quality exists in context. Nevertheless, there is also such a thing as being trained in and apt for visual things. There are some people who study very hard and know an awful lot about something but who basically you would not trust with a five-dollar bill to go out and buy a good work of art. They just don't know it.

In buying, for example, in Seattle oriental art-- For a while in that period in the late forties and early fifties where everything was fairly reasonable, you could insist upon absolute quality, which we did, basically, in the oriental field. Anything, especially that we paid any substantial sum for-- And a substantial sum for Dick Fuller was basically-- I mean, \$5,000 was about his top limit, and that had to be something spectacular. Now, that was not a lot of money even then, but it was something in the oriental field, as I tried to show you in the list of stuff I got in '48.

But in the European field, you're just playing in a different ball game and you have to get-- Well, I remember very well when I was in New York at Schaeffer Galleries back in 1948 or '49, when I first went to Seattle, he had a very beautiful Rembrandt, King David with Harp, a small

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then goes on to discuss the role of the government in the development of the country. He argues that the government has played a crucial role in the growth of the nation, and that it is essential for the government to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the individual in the development of the country. He argues that the individual has played a crucial role in the growth of the nation, and that it is essential for the individual to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the community in the development of the country. He argues that the community has played a crucial role in the growth of the nation, and that it is essential for the community to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the nation in the development of the world. He argues that the nation has played a crucial role in the growth of the world, and that it is essential for the nation to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the world in the development of the future. He argues that the world has played a crucial role in the growth of the future, and that it is essential for the world to continue to play this role in the future.

one, which subsequently was sold by Wildenstein [and Company] some years later to a New York collector for a million bucks. It was \$28,000, and he couldn't sell it in 1948 when it was \$28,000. Well, to Dick that was inconceivable. He said, "If that's the European field, I'm not going to fiddle with that. That's just too much." So in building the Seattle collection, for example, if I could buy a refined work by Luca Carlevaris--



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GARDNER: Now you get to finish the "if" clause.

LEE: If you can get a Carlevaris, a fine quality Carlevaris of an interesting subject, for \$1,600 and get the same quality, within his work, as a Canaletto, which cost \$50,000 at that time, the thing that was possible for Seattle was to get the best possible Carlevaris. So I didn't look for big names. I mean, I knew that things weren't possible. But we tried to get the best possible quality we could in smaller names.

I think this kind of thing is constantly a problem for professionals in different museums, because in a big museum with lots of money you have one possibility for standards. In a university museum with not much money, you have another possibility for standards. Simply to stubbornly repeat over and over again, "We must have quality, the best, the finest" does not make any rational sense. You've got to balance and juggle and compare and constantly think about what is going to be best in terms of top quality within a given artistic context, which means what artist where and in the context of the museum. If you have a collection like Seattle, for example, that has a splendid oriental collection--in-depth--and you have



a European collection that is just nothing by comparison, you can't insist upon getting a spectacular Rubens or Rembrandt when you know you can't get it. And if you settle for a third- or a fourth-rate Rubens or Rembrandt or a questionable Rubens or Rembrandt, then you've done the artist who painted it a disservice. You've done the people who come in the museum to look at it a disservice. On the other hand, if you get some really good quality pictures of interesting subjects and important in the context of their time and their place by lesser artists that will make things clear and, at the same time, provide some kind of aesthetic response, that's what you ought to do. So you have to have some degree of flexibility, and you have to constantly keep thinking in terms of both the context that the work of art was created in and the context in which it's going to be placed. In that way, you can gradually build a very fine collection.

Once, for example, "Chick" [A. Everett] Austin got started at Hartford [Wadsworth Atheneum]--I think I mentioned him earlier--getting some good baroque paintings, he had a context in which he could get more baroque paintings and produced something that was really meaningful to a visitor, whether a layman or a scholar. On the other hand, if you go to lots of collections-- I shan't name them right now, but if you go to collections that were formed



usually by private persons where they're buying big names and you see one picture after another which is ruined and repainted or seriously damaged, badly restored, or a painting that is a very doubtful attribution, you just get bored out of your skull. It just is terrible. And yet there are a lot of people who still think that's the way they ought to buy.

At Seattle, for example, I bought several pieces that were damaged pieces but that were (1) extremely rare and (2) extremely high quality. So the damage did not weigh much if you weighed those things and the fact that the price would be such that the museum could afford it. I remember this one here-- At C. T. [Ching-tsi] Loo's, one of the biggest dealers, there was a Ch'eng-hua reign, underglaze blue and overglaze green, small vase with a scroll decoration. There are only two other examples in the world. One is in England. It's damaged. One is in the Palace Museum in Taipei. It's complete, intact, perfect. This one had damage which could be easily restored. And it was \$200. Well, you buy it. And now everybody's keen about it because no more have turned up and it's indeed a very rare thing. It's one of the most beautiful examples of one of the highest periods in Chinese porcelain.

Each work of art is an individual. You can't talk about classes. Each work of art is an individual thing.



And you just have to judge it and think about it both emotionally and rationally and then come to some kind of a reasonable decision. This can be a matter of time. There are some things you can make up your mind and buy immediately. Usually this is true in objects more than in painting. Painting you really have to sort of test yourself and keep thinking about it. I think, in general, I would say that if you "sin in haste and repent at leisure," it's usually with a European painting or something of that nature. If you follow "He who hesitates is lost," [laughter] you usually will do better if you're in a world of objects.

Jakob Rosenberg wrote an article on quality. I've written an article on quality for a book that was published just a while ago, a series of essays on quality in different fields. I think it exists. I do not agree with a contemporary deconstructionist type of thinking which places everything in a relative scale with no possible standards of quality. I just don't think that's right, because to me it's as the Declaration of Independence says, that we hold these things to be self-evident. I think it's self-evident that there's such a thing as quality and that art is very much concerned with that question as well as others.

GARDNER: Thank you.



LEE: Does that answer it?

GARDNER: It certainly does.

LEE: Now where do we go?

GARDNER: Well, we're in Seattle. Let me ask you one thing about Seattle. Since you brought it up in contrasting Cleveland and Detroit-- Was Seattle--a private museum--the model of Cleveland?

LEE: Yes.

GARDNER: It didn't have city--?

LEE: No. No city running. No, no. It was a private museum. And Dick was so disinterested in attendance figures that he insisted to the architect that the public toilets had to be on the outside of the museum. Not inside. For most museums, the one thing they wanted-- They want all those facilities that would pull people in, quote, "even if they don't go to the museum," on the inside.

GARDNER: Just they push the counter.

LEE: Yes. They push the counter, of course. [laughter]
Now, Dick was unique and--

GARDNER: Has that changed in Seattle? Or is Seattle now--?

LEE: It's now much more like most museums. They're more homogeneous than they used to be. It used to be you could walk into a new museum and sort of just look and you could



almost sense the flavor of the museum and know what kind of a museum you were in. Not that one was necessarily better than the other, but its distinctive tone as it were. Now it's very difficult sometimes to walk in and say, "Well, where am I? If it's Tuesday, it must be Brussels." They are all very much homogenized.

One or two other things about Seattle that give you some idea of flavor and all that sort of thing, and they're fairly significant events: We acquired from Japan a very beautiful lacquer box, which is in this book [the museum handbook], I'm pretty sure. Look, it's labeled now "Gift of Mrs. Donald E. Frederick, '51-'78." I think it was about \$5,000. But it's the finest early Japanese lacquer outside Japan. A year later or so, Mayuyama cabled me and said he had this long section of The Deer Scroll by Koetsu and Sotatsu, which is one of the most famous things and was not registered. Miracle. Was I interested? I said, "Absolutely." I said, "How much?" He said, "\$5,000." I said, "Reserve it right now and I'll get back to you by cable."

I went to Dick and I showed him the books. What happened was this scroll was all one complete thing, and the dealer, Mayuyama, got it and somebody persuaded him to cut it in half. So there was the end half with the signature and seal, and the first half was then cut again



for tea ceremony fragments. They like to hang fragments in the tokonoma, so the first half of the scroll was broken up. The second half was still intact, and we could have it for \$5,000. I went to Dick and Dick said, "Oh, it's \$5,000. So much money and it's a painting. Are you sure it's okay?" I said, "Dick, for God's sake, this is an absolute once in a lifetime opportunity." He said, "No. I don't want to do it." I said, "Let me get back to you." Because my brain was working all the time.

[laughter]

I called up Mrs. Frederick and said, "I want to show you something. Can I come out right now?" I hopped in the car and I went out. I took a reproduction along. She had a pet Sicilian donkey that wandered around the house-- she was very fey--and she loved this scroll of deer. I don't care if this was for the right reason or the wrong reason, but she loved it. And I said, "Look, you bought that box for the museum, and Dick was a little bit upset because he really likes that box. It's an object. But he doesn't like this painting. Would you be willing to let him take over the box and you take the scroll? It's \$5,000, and we'll have your name on the scroll." So she said, "Yes." So I went tooling back to Dick and I said, "Dick, Mrs. Frederick will let you have the box if she can have the scroll. It will be a done deal." And Dick said,



"Okay." So I cabled Mayuyama and told him to get it right over. He brought it over himself. Today, in Japan, that half of that scroll will be at least \$2,000,000 or \$3,000,000. It's one of the greatest Japanese painting and calligraphy scrolls outside Japan. But that was Dick with paintings. He just didn't vibrate to them. And Mrs. Frederick vibrated to small donkeys and deer [laughter] and it just was wonderful.

The other little event that was kind of interesting as to how the Seattle museum was run-- We had no guards. One day, there was a theft in the museum--there were a couple of thefts of snuff bottles before, but Dick wouldn't have guards--and a scroll of a pair of not terribly important or expensive Chinese scroll paintings representing birds and flowers, hanging as a pair on either side of the case, was gone. Well, Dick was upset and I was upset. We thought it through. We thought there probably would be another effort, because it was one of the pair, and Dick just hung them up, put a nail in it and put a loop over it, and all you had to do to steal it was to roll it up and then just push it a little bit and quickly roll it up, stick it under your arm, and go. So we thought he would come back, and we thought he wouldn't come back immediately the first day but he might come back starting the second day. So we rigged up an electric line



from the front door and a buzzer to a ventilator, to a button up in a ventilator system which had a grill that looked out on that wall. The second day, when we opened the museum, I climbed up and got in that damned thing and put some pillows on that, lay up there in the ventilating shaft, looking out. Sure enough, that day, about an hour, an hour and a half after we opened, this young man came in and looked around the gallery and then rolled up the other one. We had put up another painting in place of the other one so there wasn't a gap. He started out, and I pushed the button. The bell rang out at the entrance and they nabbed him. And we got back to the place where he had sold the other one, so we got the painting back and everything. But that's the way that museum operated.

GARDNER: Why didn't he want guards? Too expensive?

LEE: Partly, he didn't like the expense. Partly, he thought they were disreputable types, [laughter] anyhow, and they might be as much problem as the thief.

GARDNER: And besides, he didn't want people coming in anyway.

LEE: Well, yes, he did want people to come in, but he didn't want them if they came in for the wrong reasons. That's a so-called question of elitism, which it's perhaps not now the time to discuss, but it's something that is involved here. But later, perhaps.



GARDNER: Well, then I guess you get a telephone call from Cleveland at some point?

LEE: Oh, now, in the meantime-- This is important, you know. In the meantime, Howard Hollis had previously, in 1948, when I first went to Seattle-- Yes, he had called me up or he came through and he said he was going to go become a dealer. Howard liked wealth, and he didn't have much. He liked a sort of business society. He told me once he thought a Mack truck was more interesting and more beautiful than any work of art he'd ever seen. Yes. And he was going to become a dealer. He thought it was easy to make money--things were so cheap and so on--and would I like to come in and work with him as a partner? I said, "No. I'm not a dealer type. I'm not interested. You go right ahead." He said, "I'm going to. I've got some backing from some friends in Cleveland. I've resigned as a curator there, and I'm going to become a dealer. I'm going to work partly with Mayuyama." I said, "Fine. Well, what are you going to do when you bring your stuff to this country? We have a custom service here [in Seattle]. Why don't you clear your stuff here? We can get the customs to agree to have stuff unpacked at the museum, where we have proper care to take care of these things and so on, and also then we'll have a look at what you've got and we can have a first refusal at your regular



prices." So he thought that was a very good idea. We got some wonderful material from him because of that arrangement of having the material unpacked there.

Incidentally, when Mayuyama first came to the states, he wanted to have an exhibition. I said, "Why don't you have an exhibition in Seattle to show off the best selection of material you have for Japanese art?" And he said yes. So we had an exhibition of Mayuyama's collection, a dealer's collection. It's not quite such a kosher thing to do in terms of the big scene, but it was very effective. People loved it. He had some wonderful stuff, and we were able to buy from that exhibition a group of very important things at very, very modest prices. It worked out very well. Mayuyama arrived after we unpacked his things and hung them and everything was ready. He arrived the day before the opening and he walked in the gallery and looked around, and it was the first time I've ever seen this in a Japanese: he grabbed me around and burst into tears, sobbing away because he was so happy. [laughter] He was so unbelievable.

But in the meantime, after Howard had left Cleveland to become a dealer, William [M.] Milliken had bought a few things from Howard, very good things. And he would call me up and say, "What do you think about that?" And then I would advise him just as a colleague. We had quite a few



phone calls and then he said, "How would you like to come as a curator for oriental art? Howard shows no sign of wanting to come back or anything, and the trustees feel that there should be someone that-- It's not proper for me to be making decisions with a former curator on buying." This is quite true, and I didn't say anything about it. And I said, "Well, I think we like it--we like Cleveland-- and certainly it's more active in terms of major purchases. Also, it's got a great European collection. I'd feel much more at home. I'd like to be somewhere where I can see some things. And it's got a better library, etc., etc. I have to say that Seattle is a wonderful city and the area around is beautiful. Wonderful but willy-nilly; it is remote. Psychologically, you feel that you are not quite in Western civilization, and we would like very much to get back to Cleveland."

So we said we'd do it. Dick was rather unhappy, but he also was getting married, and we were not particularly au courant with the prospective bride. We thought this was the right time, so Ruth and I agreed and we went to Cleveland. We arrived in, I don't know, early fall '52 I think it was. So I'd gone back to where I had, in a sense, come from in graduate studies, and in a great museum with wonderful facilities. I thought this was a terrific opportunity and I set to work right away, you



know, to try to further develop collections.

GARDNER: What kinds of changes did you perceive in the place at Cleveland? Had Milliken changed, for example, with the--? Now you've got over ten years.

LEE: No, basically it was very much the same. The library was run by two librarians who were always at each other's throats but couldn't live without each other. Books were still behind glass doors. It was very, very old-fashioned like Boston back in the twenties. The utility staff was all very much the same. The superintendent was sort of Irish-- What's the word I want without being too damaging? Well, he was a hail-fellow-well-met and played a lot of favorites and I don't think was on top of the job. The education department, Dr. Munro, still there, going along fine. Henry [Sayles] Francis was still the curator of the paintings. It was all very much the same.

The one element that had changed was that there were now appearing on the walls some really important, significant impressionist and postimpressionist paintings. Not abstract paintings--that had not yet begun ever under Milliken. But nearly all were gifts of the Hanna Fund. This was Leonard C. Hanna Jr. That was his fund and his channel for giving. That was different. There was a very serious development in the field of especially nineteenth-century painting--and here and there in old master



paintings--with gifts from the Hanna Fund. I think that this was also partly due to the donor himself. Leonard was very much interested. He had a very nice collection of impressionist and postimpressionist paintings. He was very interested in the art market and the good life. His love was theater. One of his great friends was Bea [Beatrice] Lillie and so on. He was in the set in New York. He spent all summer in Cleveland at his farm out near Mentor [Ohio]. That was what was different, and it also was what very much made it a different place.

GARDNER: Who was Leonard Hanna?

LEE: Oh, gosh! I wish Ruth were here. He was the grandson of Mark Hanna, and the family had made a fortune in M. A. Hanna Company, iron ore shipping. He had gone to Yale [University], where he had been a friend of Cole Porter's, among others. And he was homosexual. He was interested in theater, art, and began collecting prints and things when he was still a student at Yale. A terribly nice man. Very kind. Very gentle. Impressive. Big head. Wide jaw structure. He had, I think, polio problems. Had to work from a wheelchair most of the time. He lived the kind of life that you would expect Cole Porter to live. He rose about eleven or twelve o' clock and was up until four A.M.



TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE

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GARDNER: As I think we just agreed, we left off with your arriving at the Cleveland Museum [of Art]. We talked a little bit about Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], who he was and his generosity. Let me ask you this to get started: Were there other board members who had contributed in a similar manner?

LEE: Oh, yes, on a smaller scale. Severance Millikin, who was the nephew of John L. Severance, was on the board. Mr. Severance had been a very generous donor and had established a purchase fund for the museum some years before. John L. Severance made his money at Standard Oil and was very much interested in the orchestra. His nephew succeeded him on the board representing the family. He insisted that they not cash in their bequest of Severance holdings in Standard Oil and some other things, because he thought they were way underpriced. They had a big argument and some hard feelings, but he was right. And the Severance Fund didn't really come into operation until about the mid 1940s, but at a much higher figure.

There was a lot of family representation on the board. A. Dean Perry was married to Geenie Wade [Perry], who was the daughter of J. H. Wade, who had been one of



the founders of the museum and a major donor. There was a large Wade Fund.

The president of the board when I came was Harold T. Clark, who was an eminent lawyer on his own. He had left firms. He didn't like firms. He had been the secretary to Newton D. Baker, the secretary of war in World War I, and was, like most Clevelanders, a Yale [University] man. He was Leonard Hanna's lawyer. That was a combination that was unimaginable to anyone, because Leonard was, as I said, interested in theater, he was a homosexual, he was very much interested in art, he had a good eye. He was so affable and easygoing, just marvelous. Harold was a Christian Scientist, not much sense of humor, very, very puritanical, very much opposed to smoking and drinking, but a very, very keen mind and a very strong set of principles and a lot of courage. A lot of things he did were very important, as I'll try to say later on.

And then there was Ralph-- Memory, where are you?

GARDNER: Schmitt?

LEE: Yes.

GARDNER: I did write down some of them.

LEE: Good. Ralph [S.] Schmitt is related in some way to the Weyerhaeuser [Company] interest. At the time I arrived, there was a trustee who was vice president or maybe treasurer, Lewis B. Williams, who had been president



of the Federal Reserve in Cleveland and also president and chief executive officer of National City Bank. There was Emery May Norweb, who was to succeed Harold Clark as president later on, who was a Holden. The Holdens had been traditionally very big benefactors of the museum. And she was married to a foreign service diplomat, R. Henry Norweb Jr., who had served in various places, including Lisbon during World War II as ambassador. Emery May was a very, very powerful person, very direct, and sometimes with a very-- What's the word I want? Not perverse but a sense of humor that could result in practical jokes that were sometimes embarrassing. Jim Sherwin, James [N.] Sherwin, who was from an old Cleveland family--Sherwin-Williams Paint Company--

GARDNER: I think that's a good enough representation. I was interested in the ones you were most involved with.

LEE: Well, I arrived in '52, and that period between '52 and '58, when I became director, was really sort of a transitional period. The transitional nature of it was that it was really a shifting from the total dominance of the old guard to beginnings of some opening to other members of the Cleveland structure and also to a more businesslike, in the best sense of the word, and rational approach to relationships between board, director, and staff. William [M.] Milliken had always been very



personal. He was a good friend, as I said, of Mrs. Mather and Mrs. Ingalls and John Severance and so forth and so on. So it had been a very personal relationship.

When I arrived I was curator of oriental art. I was very anxious to develop the collections, because they now had some, with the Severance Fund-- The Hanna money was not yet part of the museum, but Leonard was there and his foundation was there, and they occasionally would give money for purchases and projects. Howard [C.] Hollis was the dealer who had been the curator. Howard and William had not got along terribly well when Howard was there, but after Howard resigned and became a dealer, then William really sort of felt an obligation somehow to have a close relationship in purchasing from Howard as he had with other dealers in his own field. While I owed a great deal to Howard and we were very good friends at that time, I felt it was my responsibility to develop the collections in a more open and broader way than from just one person. Also, Howard dealt primarily in Japanese art and we needed Chinese art especially and we needed Indian art and Southeast Asian art, and this meant you had to reach out to all kinds of people.

GARDNER: Did you have contacts with all those places?
Did you have contact with Southeast Asia as well?

LEE: Well, the market for Southeast Asian material



actually was stronger in France than it was-- Because of their colonial relationship.

GARDNER: Especially in 1952.

LEE: Yes. I knew almost all the dealers in Japan. China was in the midst of the throes of the communist takeover, then the PRC [People's Republic of China], so there was no dealing with them. Hong Kong was not all that active-- some. But the centers for Chinese art were New York, Paris, London basically. So the first thing William agreed and Harold Clark very much agreed, since I had never been to Europe-- So I was told to go. I think I spent six weeks or two months in 1953, which was my first trip. Ruth [Ward Lee] couldn't go because of the kids and everything. So I took off and went across on the Queen Mary in cabin class. I went to Paris. I basically made a grand tour, starting from Paris and going to Dijon and then going from Dijon to Milan--this is all by train of course--to Venice, Bologna to Florence to Siena to Perugia, Assisi, Orvieto, Rome. I decided not to go below Rome because I could do that some other time, and I wanted to go to Vienna, Munich, then to Amsterdam--there was some oriental dealing there--and then to London and then home. The trip had two purposes. I think the major purpose was to give me more of a foundation and more direct experience in European art with the originals, of course, secondarily



to meet the other dealers in the field of oriental art.

But that trip was a fantastic experience because, well, it was the first time, but also-- I had really studied an awful lot about European art. I knew a lot about it in terms of book reading and illustration, so I was reasonably well prepared to use the time efficiently. Then secondly, since I was alone--I didn't want to be, but I was alone--I could concentrate very much on day-to-day preparation. So every day before I went anyplace, I would carefully study the pertinent best guidebook, the text on the subject and the map, so that I knew the city pretty well in terms of how to walk from here and whatever was the next thing to do. I really was--I made a distinct effort to be--well prepared. My training as a navigator meant that I could read maps easily and I could use them efficiently, and it was a big help.

I could go on for hours about that experience, but I will simply mention a couple of things that might give some indication. First, in terms of scholarly personalities, William Milliken had insisted that I must meet Mr. [Bernard] Berenson because he was William Milliken's hero. By that time I had not such a high opinion of Berenson, due to my reading of some Italian scholars like Evelyn Sandberg Vavalà and reading some of the French--I mentioned [Henri] Focillon and so on. But



anyhow, William scheduled a meeting with Berenson. Berenson was going to be in Milan when I was going to be there, and he scheduled for us to meet. We both stayed at the same hotel, which was a very modern sort of a Western-style, British-style hotel just outside the city walls. I can't remember the name of it. I met the great man in the hotel. The reason he stayed there of course was because he very much wanted creature comforts he'd had all his life. The plumbing in this hotel was excellent and so forth and so on, and that's why he stayed there. Of course I was a callow youth with no experience. But he was very kind and very nice and suggested a few things that I should do in Milan, in addition to what I planned to do.

He wanted to know when I would be in Florence, and I told him. He said he would invite me to lunch there. And to follow that up, at [Villa] i Tatti outside Florence-- Berenson's villa-- I did go there to lunch, where there were a lot of people. It didn't register much with me, except I thought the whole general performance was a little bit-- What is the word I want? It is the word that occurs in novels of Kingsley Amis. "Too shame-making." Berenson sat at the head of the table, or in the middle, when I was there the first time. It was like a salon with the master of the salon at the head of the table. There



was an awful lot of subserviency. It was very civilized, very literate, and quite dazzling, but a little bit too much of this kind of thing.

And then I went on to other places. I remember, for instance, in going to Assisi, I got off the train and I walked up the hill, which was about two and a half miles or so I think. I went around the cathedral, the basilica, very carefully, but I had also looked at the map and I just knew how to get from here to there. I just knew how to use the time very well. And Assisi was a great, great experience, one which-- I won't say it was predictable, but it lived up to expectations. And the expectations were high from my reading and from looking at reproductions.

But the extraordinary kind of thing, one of the great aesthetic experiences of my life, was when I got to Florence. This was in October, I believe, and it was very cold and quite wet too, occasionally. While I was in Florence I went to see the Medici Chapel. I went at about eleven thirty [A.M.]. I didn't really think much about lunch in those days. I just said yes and no anytime or whenever. I got there and everybody was leaving, because it was time for lunch. I looked at the first of the church and around, and then I was going back to the chapel. I got there about twelve or twelve fifteen [P.M.]



and everybody was leaving. Pretty soon there was no one there except there was a guard outside. He wasn't in the Michelangelo chapel, and I was there alone for about at least an hour--I think about an hour, lunchtime. That was extraordinary, because, as you know, it's a funerary chapel. It's dead serious. I strongly feel that it was meant to be seen alone. It's the tomb with all the symbolic meaning for the people buried there. The definition of the space and the tomb and the concreteness of that space and then those figures-- It just was an absolutely tremendous experience which was very both humbling and tragic. That's what it's supposed to be, and you get that when you're there and there's nothing else. If you're there--and I've gone back to it--there are always people there talking, and there's somewhat of a hush, but it is a different experience. So that really hit me very, very hard.

Everything was just terrific. I was especially hit by the frescos of Piero at the church of San Francesco, Arezzo, before recent restorations. They've been repaired; they've been doing some cleaning and so forth. But there were very few people at these places because it was off-season. They were a tremendous experience.

GARDNER: Did you visit the museums too? Not just to see the art, but to see the way European museums dealt with



their--?

LEE: I didn't have a schedule or a conscious program of looking at museums. I noted with great interest some of the new small Italian provincial museums that were done by different modern architects, some of which were extremely successful. Others were perfectly appalling, particularly those that used steel tubes and so forth, almost like an automobile car rack, as pedestals for Renaissance sculptures. That kind of thing really got me upset.

I remember the archaeological museum in Brescia was a very simple--all stone--use of stone, which was appropriate for the basically classical and Etruscan material that was in it. I found some of those very, very good. I paid attention to places like-- They had done a reinstallation in the old castle at Verona, where the couple of masterpieces of Pisanello and Stefano di Verona are. I paid attention and I thought that was done very well. The old galleries like the Accademia in Venice were a bit of a trial, because sometimes pictures were hung high and you really couldn't look at them carefully. Sometimes the light, particularly on a rainy day, was just not there.

But I'd read about all this stuff. I'd studied it. I'd never seen it. It was just one grand experience after the other. I was walking four feet above the ground most



of the time. I was also very much aware of my wife being out of this. She was at home taking care of the kiddies. So I did one thing which I think she very much appreciated but shows what singleness of purpose can accomplish. She wanted a good sewing machine, and the best sewing machines that were made then were Italian--Necchi. In Rome I ran across a place where I could buy a Necchi at a fairly reasonable price. So I bought a heavy portable Necchi. I lugged that thing with my other luggage all the way back to London and to the boat and got it home as a present from the trip. This was 1953. Also, in the street just below the Spanish staircase, I went into a little leather shop that had just opened by the name of Gucci and bought my wife a purse for ten dollars, little knowing what Gucci was to become.

The picture galleries-- The Louvre was just overwhelming. It's just a grand place for grand pictures. I can't imagine a better environment. The Uffizi [Gallery] was very good. The pictures, of course, were beyond compare. But at that time the environment was a little bit too conservative and too old-fashioned. It didn't really do justice to the spirit of a lot of the pictures. In the first galleries, with the great names of Duccio and Giotto, the curator obviously had worked hard. But the further on you got, you detected a decline of



interest on the part of trying to make things look well. I thought most of it was rather disappointing. The National Gallery in London was just a sheer delight, as it always is. The British and the Scotch have a real gift for understanding European painting and showing it so that it comes out to its best advantage, I think. I didn't get to Germany at that time. At Berenson's place in Florence, the I Tatti, I made careful note of the oriental things. He had some very good things. He very kindly asked my opinion of several of them. [tape recorder off]

Of course I went to the dealers in Paris. I went to C. T. Loo and Company and a dealer--Robert Rousset--over on the Avenue Friedland, Compagnie Général des Arts de la Chine et des Indes, or something like that, and I saw some interesting things. Jean-Pierre Dubosc, who was Loo's son-in-law, was then beginning to do some dealing. He was a kind of marchand amateur. In London, I met a lot of the dealers. I became rather friendly with Peter Vaughn at John Sparks, Ltd., a wonderful place for porcelain and ceramics. And of course I went to Spinks, where Adrian Maynard was at that time there in charge of the oriental department. They had all kinds of things--a very good place. Then the famous ceramic dealers, [Edgar and Roger] Bluett. And so I did all these things. I bought for nothing, and still have, two of the leaves from an album



by the Japanese painter Chinzan that I found on a produce cart in the Piazza Borghese in Rome. At that time I don't think I saw anything that I went after for the museum, because I was by then deeply involved with some of the objects on the market in New York, for very special circumstances which I will mention in a minute.

But that European trip really gave me a foundation. I looked very hard and I spent all my time doing it and I felt I had learned a great deal. I had been fortunate that I hadn't gone to Europe before I had studied a lot. Having studied a lot and then going made it, to me, a much more meaningful and delightful and awe-inspiring experience.

I got back and talk was beginning about doing a new wing, which Leonard was very much interested in. I forgot to mention that Harold Clark, the president of the board, had been very helpful to me in getting established in Cleveland, because we had sold our house in Seattle, very fortunately. In Cleveland I was able to find a place, and since I was a veteran I could get a G.I. mortgage at 4 1/2 percent. Harold, through his connections, had arranged for me to get the mechanics of it done and to get a loan to start the process and so on. So he had been very, very helpful. He, incidentally, was a former tennis player. He was interested in tennis, which was a coincidence, but



gave us something else to talk about except business.

GARDNER: Was there a general understanding that you were going to be Milliken's successor?

LEE: No, I don't think so. I've thought about that. I don't think there was any kind of general understanding on the part of the board. I'm sure William had not thought that way, because he had assumed, as he said to me on a later occasion, that Henry [Sayles] Francis would be his successor--the curator of paintings.

But very early on I had an experience on a purchase which was very interesting. There was a new dealer who I'd first met in 1941 in New York City named Walter Hochstadter, who had come from Peking. He was a bachelor. He took care of his father and mother, who he had extracted from Europe under the threat of the Nazis. They were Jewish. And he was a most difficult person--one of the most inhibited and psychologically unstable persons I've ever met--but a real genius at understanding Chinese painting and Chinese art. He had started with nothing I think, but had bought this, that, and the other thing. I had bought one piece from him for Detroit, which was a great early Ming blue and white bowl, which the photographer-- Did we say anything about this?

GARDNER: No.



LEE: The photographer at Detroit [Institute of Arts] was an ex-marine. To put it very quickly, I bought from Walter Hochstadter immediately after the Eumorfopolous sale in London, right when the blitz was going, a very important early Ming blue and white bowl. Today it would be worth more than a half a million dollars. I paid, as I remember, \$400 for it, for Detroit. I was away for a day or two and I had left instructions for the piece to be photographed. I got back and the marine greeted me and told me, with a smile on his face, he was sorry but he dropped the bowl.

GARDNER: Oh, my God.

LEE: I could have killed him. It was the end of our relationship.

GARDNER: I bet it was.

LEE: Unbelievable, but rather typical of that particular photographer. But that I got from Hochstadter.

Since Hochstadter principally dealt in Chinese paintings, and since Dick [Richard] Fuller was not terribly interested in paintings, I didn't do much with Hochstadter in Seattle. But the minute I hit Cleveland, I went after him in a big way. He had a very famous handscroll published everywhere. It's supposed to be by Yen Wen-Kuei. It was published all over the place and it was \$25,000, which was quite a substantial price in 1953. I



said, "I think it's terrific. I want to take it, and I'll take it back to Cleveland on approval if you're willing." He said, "Fine." So I got it and I took it back to the hotel. I went to Leonard Hanna, who had an apartment in New York where he stayed all during the theatrical season. As usual, I said I'd come by. It was after the theater, so I got there about midnight. I showed him the painting. I said, "This is something major and important for the museum." He liked it and he said, "How much?" I said, "It's \$25,000." And he said, "Well, I'll have the fund give it to the museum." So I thanked him very much.

I went back to the museum with the painting, and began to study it more and began to study it more. And I began to have some qualms. I had the photographer make some photographic blowups so I could study the brushwork more carefully without having to breathe over the painting all the time. I could prove it was a copy. It just was not-- It was a copy. Well, you can imagine how I felt with Leonard, the big donor, because he said he'd give it-- So I went back to Leonard and I said, "I'm sorry, but you're not going to have to spend that \$25,000, because that painting's not right. It's a copy, and thank God we caught it before we bought it." He said, "That's all right, I understand."

So I took the painting back to Hochstadter--this is



so typical--and I said, "Walter, this picture is a later copy. I think it's probably a Ming copy." I showed him why and he took it pretty well. Then he said, "Would you be interested in another painting like this but of early date?" And he pulled out a handscroll called Chi Shan Wu Chin, which is "Streams and Mountains without End" and which is now one of the classic paintings of the eleventh century, and showed it to me. It came from the ex-imperial collection and it was not signed, no attribution, but an absolutely superb painting, clearly right.

So I went back to Leonard with not much hope. I thought, "Now, this is really ludicrous." Leonard was absolutely marvelous. He looked at it. He said, "I like it. It's very good." Now he said, "You're sure about this one?" I said, "Leonard, I really have done a lot of work on this now and I'm sure there is no problem about this. I think it is a very important painting and a very beautiful painting." He said, "Okay. I'll give it." And that's how we just happened to get that painting. But it also was typical of Leonard. I mean, he was a real gentleman, and he didn't hold things against you or anything like that.

Now, at that time, as I mentioned to you before, Tommy [Thomas] Munro didn't have much use for William Milliken. Harold Clark thought William was a bit much.



Leonard got along quite well, until later on when the incident of the moving of the building stakes, which we mentioned before, made Leonard very mad. But basically that was the relationship of the upper echelons of the board with William.

Leonard invited Ruth and me and Harold and Marie--Mr. and Mrs. Clark--to come and have lunch out at his farm during the summertime. I think this was probably about maybe '54. Leonard always had cocktails, always, and Harold never-- Very rarely. He might have a small sherry or something like that. Marie Clark never had anything. So there we were at Leonard's, and Leonard's butler was his companion, and Leonard greeted us. This was the first time Ruth had met Leonard, and Leonard asked if we would like something to drink. Well, there's Harold there and there's Marie, and here's Leonard and here's us. I said, "Yes, sure, I'd love to have a drink. Thank you very much." And Ruth said she'd have a sherry. But I could see Harold sort of just a little bit-- He didn't show anybody, but he was just a little bit quiet. But Leonard was happy as a clam. I suspect--I'm not sure--that this was sort of a trial run to see how these new fledglings were. And I'm glad I did [have a drink], because I think you can't just do things because somebody might disapprove. You've got to do what you normally do.

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Things began to develop when the new wing started to take shape. Then we had the contretemps about the stakes and there were a lot of other things. They made me assistant director when the project began so I could help William with the administrative thing. That's when William told me not to misunderstand this, that Henry Francis was the heir apparent. It never occurred to me that I was going to be director at that time. But then when we had the contretemps, they made me the associate director and put me in charge of the liaison between the builders and the architect and the board, completely bypassing the director. Then I realized that there was something afoot.

And also, I saw a quite a bit of Tommy, because I was his student. We talked a lot, and we would exchange glances in the director's luncheon room when one of these farces was going on. Harold had a lot of respect for Tommy, because of his work with children's education, especially. So that had a certain social value, rather than just art. That was appealing particularly to Mrs. Clark, who was the social worker type. Anyhow, Tommy and Harold got along together. Tommy never said anything to me, but I'm reasonably certain that Tommy occasionally bent Harold's ear about this business. As the building came to completion, I told you I had a real collapse. I



was frazzled out and got flu and so forth. But before that, while I was working on the last stages of the building and we were beginning to install galleries and so forth, Harold had told me that he thought, in his opinion, that it was likely that I would become the next director. I said that I was very honored and pleased and scared about it too.

But Leonard had not been well. He was failing rapidly. He had moved from his apartment, in the fifties, down to the [Hotel] Pierre. They had installed his painting collection and furniture and some paneling and so forth in a suite at the Pierre. That's where he was, and I can't remember exactly when it was but I think it was-- See, Leonard did not live to see the opening; he died before the opening. It must have been '57, I would think, fall of '57 or spring. Anyhow, '57. Harold asked me to go to New York, and Leonard was in bed. It was his sickbed and his deathbed--he died about three or four weeks later--and Harold and I went in to say hello to Leonard, and David, his butler, was there. He was able to talk well, but he was clearly very, very ill. It sounds corny, but it was a very moving experience. He took my hand in both his hands and said that he and Harold had talked about all this and it was agreed that I would be the best person to be the next director of the museum. He



had great confidence in me and he was sure that I would do everything that was right for the museum. He wanted to let me know that I had his full support. So naturally I was very moved by it. That was the last I saw of Leonard, because he died shortly-- And then they had the funeral service out at Leonard's farm, and all the family and the friends of the museum--



TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO

APRIL 9, 1992

GARDNER: You were describing the funeral.

LEE: I had gotten lost out in Mentor [Ohio]. I got there just after the service had begun and there was no sitting room left. I was out in the hall looking in on the room and I was with George Humphrey, who had been [United States] secretary of the treasury. People may think that he was too conservative. He was [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's secretary of the treasury. But he was a man of tremendous intellect--brilliant. He had steely blue eyes that could just transfix you. He was a real personality. We were out there and he said, "How do you do," because he had met me once or twice. Leonard had a sister, Fannie [Hanna] Moore, and her son [Paul Moore] was the famous anti-Vietnam War rector. He was delivering the funeral in memoriam. And I couldn't believe my ears, because he was actually apologizing for Leonard's life-style in the memoriam and sort of criticized him. George Humphrey was there, and I looked over at him and I said, "I can't stand this." He thought it was a disgrace. I shuddered when I thought-- And we sort of nipped out. We didn't nip out, we just moved to the side so we didn't have to watch this terrible thing going on. Then the thing was over, and



Leonard's ashes were scattered over the farm from an airplane. And that was it.

We opened the new wing in March of 1958. I was made director on April Fool's Day, April 1, 1958. Before that, there had been nothing in the bylaws or the articles of incorporation of the museum about retirement age for the director. After things got a little bit difficult between William and Leonard and Harold because of the situation with the building of the new wing, the trustees had started to amend the bylaws to make the retirement age sixty-five. They decided they would make it sixty-five, but that they would make a special dispensation for the present director, William, to make retirement sixty-seven and a half, halfway between seventy and sixty-five. Which coincided with April 1, 1958. So William fell short, by a small amount--I don't know about how many months it was--of having been director for thirty years. He had been director for twenty-nine or something like that. Anyhow, William was very upset at this. He was very upset and several things developed. All these things were happening one right after another, March and then April 1 and the first week in April. William wanted an office in the museum after retirement. I said nothing on that, but Harold Clark said no. "This is always bad," he said. "I've seen it at the bank. I've seen it in law firms.



It's no go, no office in the museum." Well, that really hurt William a lot. He was very upset at that.

But then Leonard had died not long before the museum opened. There was a lot of speculation in the paper about what the Hanna bequest was going to be. Leonard had been a very generous donor to Yale, to the University Hospital in Cleveland. He built the big psychiatric pavilion at University Hospital--Hanna Pavilion--and had given money for other things. And the museum. Those were his three principal charities. Harold Clark was his lawyer. And Harold got on the phone not long after I came in as director and said, "You'll be very pleased to hear-- because since I'm his lawyer, I've got all the figures-- that the museum is going to receive the collection, of course, and \$15 million." That's a lot of money in 1958. Just a few days later, Harold called me up and said, "I'm sorry, I don't quite understand this, but the figures now are quite different. The museum is going to get \$26 or \$27 million. And then there was another phone call just a few days later. He said, "It's amazing, but the figure for the museum is going to be \$35 million."

Leonard had been buying, ever since he was a young man at Yale, stock in a new company called IBM [International Business Machines Corporation]. With all the stock splits and so forth, this had just piled and



piled and piled, and his financial people and his own lawyer didn't fully have a grasp on what it was they were dealing with. Aside from the fact that that's a marvelous bequest, the important thing was that--and this was due to Harold Terry Clark-- A lot of people didn't like Harold because of his puritanical character and so forth, and he often was the butt of jokes, etc. But it was Harold Terry Clark who convinced Leonard C. Hanna Jr. that it was not fair to the institution or the people of the city to give that much money, all that money, just for acquisitions-- income for acquisitions--but that the acquisitions had to be cared for, the building had to be cared for, there had to be staff, a library, and he should give it fifty-fifty. Fifty percent income for acquisitions and 50 percent income for operations. And that was the making of the museum for the next twenty-five years.

GARDNER: Because it's so rare that you get money like that for operations.

LEE: It's so rare. But it shows one how intelligent Harold Clark was, and also how forceful. It also tells how intelligent and flexible Leonard was, that he would listen and change something that he really wanted to do. He liked acquisitions but he saw the logic of it, and he did it. That is the single most important thing that happened to the museum between the time it was founded and



the present day. And by this wonderful coincidence, sheer luck, it happened at exactly the time I became director. That meant that there were all kinds of possibilities that had not existed before. And, as I said then and say now, I say, "So help me Hanna." And he did.

There's one little story, at this juncture, which I think is of some interest. I don't know how it happened-- I was in pretty run-down condition after the building was finished. But I was at a party with various friends of ours out toward Gates Mills [Ohio], at the house of Jim [James A.] Hughes, who was the president of Diamond Shamrock company and a tennis partner in this group that I played tennis with. I felt kind of poorly. Jim's son was going around with a shoeshine kit doing shoeshines for fifty cents or a dollar, or whatever it was. Ruth said she had never seen me do anything like this before, but I kicked at him, saying, "Go away." Then I said, "I've got to go and lie down." I went to lie down and I was hurting like hell.

So they decided to call a doctor. A good friend of ours, another one in our tennis group, David Weir, was just three hundred yards, four hundred yards away. So Hughes called up Weir and said, "Something's wrong with Sherman and could you come over?" He said, "No, I can't come over. He's not my patient. You get his own doctor,



Jerry Kent." Everybody thought this was a strange and callous way to do it, but that's the way David Weir was. So they called my doctor and he came out, and of course it was a red-hot appendix. They took me down to the University-- Ruth went with me down to the University Hospital. They had another tennis friend of mine, also a hunter--he's a very good trapshooter and upland quail and duck shooter and so on--Dr. Frank Barry, who is a very funny man and a great surgeon. The paper had just come out that morning with the announcement that the art museum had received \$35 million from Leonard C. Hanna, and University Hospital got, I think, \$1 million or \$1.5 million. And Yale, I think, got \$1 million. Frank Barry, of course, was one of the big surgeons at University Hospital. They had me on the operating table and they were just going to do the anesthesia, and Frank Barry leaned over me and he said, "I ought to cut your throat, you son of a bitch." [laughter]

GARDNER: [laughter] And then put you out.

LEE: And then put me out. So that was my welcome.

GARDNER: Let me back you up and ask you a couple of questions.

LEE: Sure.

GARDNER: When the extension of the new wing was first discussed, were you involved in that at all, or was that



strictly the board and Milliken?

LEE: That was the board and Milliken. The actual first planning of the museum, the architect was the local architect, J. Byers Hayes, who was a very earnest and competent architect, but not terribly imaginative. He was not a great architect, but I got to know him quite well and we got along quite well. He was scrupulously honest, and that's why he and William sort of began to fall out. The thing was pretty well set as far as design and drawings go before I got into it on the overall thing. I got into it because some of the new galleries in the new building were going to be oriental galleries, and I had to be involved with that. Basically, I think I got into it, as I remember, about as the building began to get framed in at above ground level. I would say soon after the steelwork was beginning to go up.

GARDNER: And I guess we're talking close to two years, the period that you were involved.

LEE: Yes.

GARDNER: Were you able to do the rest of your job during that time?

LEE: Sure. Oh, sure.

GARDNER: Guiding a construction like that is really in many ways almost a full-time job when you're the liaison.

LEE: Remember, there's the architect, then there's the



clerk of the works, who represents the museum, and then I was the liaison person. So I didn't have full responsibility in terms of all the work to be done. But I had full responsibility for everything that had to do with the building and people concerned with the building and their reports and trustee evaluations and decisions on the building as it progressed. It was a harrowing experience in a way, because William was always on the edges and always wanting to get his word in on the thing. Which I think actually he had every right to do.

I did think that things were not going too well, largely because--and this I think was probably Harold Clark's responsibility-- The contractor for the building was an old Cleveland friend, Sam W. Emerson Company. And because of Leonard's health they wanted to get this building along as rapidly as possible. They negotiated-- Instead of having a fixed-price contract, it was a cost-plus contract. And of course, I don't care who the contractor is, if he's as pure as the driven snow, a cost-plus contract is an invitation to disaster. You get things done fast, but it also is very, very expensive. The proof of the pudding is that the 1958 wing was 110,000 square feet in 1958, and it cost, before it was over, over \$9 million in 1958. Cost-plus contract. The [Marcel] Breuer wing, which was finished in 1972-- I don't know, I

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
IN TWO VOLUMES
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
OF THE BARR

THE FIRST VOLUME
CONTAINING THE HISTORY
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE YEAR 1780
IN TWO VOLUMES
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OF THE BARR

THE SECOND VOLUME
CONTAINING THE HISTORY
FROM THE YEAR 1780
TO THE PRESENT TIME
IN TWO VOLUMES
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OF THE BARR

forget these dates. But the Breuer wing--

GARDNER: 'Seventy-one is the date I have.

LEE: Yes, '71, which was thirteen years later. It was 110,000 square feet and came in at \$6.4 million, and that was a fixed-price contract. At the end of it we had a horrendous two-month negotiation session with the contractors, Turner [Construction] Company, who claimed that they needed another couple of million dollars because the drawings had not indicated everything right. But we just toughed that one out. Bob [Robert] Gale, who was a trustee and good friend, who had a very sudden and terrible death-- Bob Gale and I negotiated that one out with the Turner Company, and they didn't get anything. And one of the worst, steeliest looks I ever got in my life, directly, directly at me, was from the head of their Middle West operation--because they were a national company--who later I think became the head of the company, Herb [Herbert D.] Conant. After the negotiation was all finished and everything and we shook hands and everybody was leaving, I said, "Well, Herb, maybe you could give this \$1.5 or \$2 million as a contribution to the museum and get a tax deduction." And he gave me a terrible look.

GARDNER: But clever idea, though.

LEE: But that's a big difference over \$9 million in 1958. We learned a lot. Everyone learned a lot on that first



operation. It was a really meaningful learning experience. One you'd never forget.

GARDNER: During the time leading up to your becoming the director, during the time you were there and curator of the oriental collection, were you thinking about what was good and what was bad about the museum? What kinds of things were weak and what kinds of things strong?

LEE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I was very much aware, because of my background as a generalist, my background under [William R.] Valentiner, who was something of a generalist-- I was deeply interested in relatively modern painting, European art. I was interested in everything. I was very deeply aware of what the major shortcomings at the Cleveland Museum of Art were. At one time, I remember very, very well when I was at Detroit [Institute of Arts] and I was talking to E. P. [Edgar Preston] Richardson about different museums and collections and so on-- I had no connection with Cleveland, except that I had studied there as a graduate student. But Ted Richardson said something that I would never forget. He said, "Well, Cleveland is a fine museum, but it represents every tradition except our own." And you stop to think about it and-- Ted, I think, was specifically referring to the American collection, which is what he developed very strongly in Detroit. That's what I think he meant by that



remark. At the same time, I could take that remark and look at that collection, and in terms of the European collection, you could say it represented every tradition except sort of the main one. The weakest part of the collection was old master painting. The American collection was very weak. They had tremendous strengths in medieval art, a good solid collection of classical and Egyptian art. The oriental collection, before we really began to work on it in 1952, was small. There were some very good things in it--Howard bought some very, very good things--but there was really no depth and no breadth. The modern collection was really very spotty and uneven. There was no abstract painting in the museum, not one. Leonard didn't like abstract painting. He liked the impressionist, postimpressionist--Matisse and so on, you know, that tradition.

GARDNER: So it stopped there? It stopped at Matisse?

LEE: Well, it stopped at-- Well, you know, Leonard had the Matisse, the museum did not.

GARDNER: Oh, the museum didn't?

LEE: No. The collection basically stopped, as far as the mainstream of modern art, with Picasso's La vie, a great picture that William bought back in 1946 with the money provided by Leonard Hanna and the Hanna Fund, which had been deaccessioned by the Rhode Island School of Design

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the success of any business and for the protection of the interests of all parties involved. The author argues that without accurate records, it is impossible to make informed decisions or to identify areas for improvement.

2. The second part of the paper describes the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It discusses the advantages and disadvantages of different techniques, such as surveys, interviews, and experiments. The author also provides examples of how these methods have been used in previous studies and how they can be applied to the current research.

3. The third part of the paper presents the results of the study. It shows that there is a significant correlation between the accuracy of records and the success of the business. The author also identifies some of the factors that influence the accuracy of records, such as the quality of the data and the skill of the person collecting it.

4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the implications of the findings for future research and for practice. It suggests that further studies should be conducted to explore the relationship between record-keeping and business success in different contexts. It also provides some practical advice for businesses on how to improve their record-keeping practices.

5. The final part of the paper is a conclusion. It summarizes the main findings of the study and reiterates the importance of accurate records for business success. The author also expresses his hope that the findings of the study will be useful to other researchers and to businesses alike.

Museum [of Art] when Gordon Washburn was director there. One of the great examples of why deaccessioning, improperly conducted, can be a total disaster. But that's where the modern European collection stopped. There were no German expressionist paintings. There were no paintings from cubism on through. There was no Matisse.

GARDNER: Was this the combination of the lack of interest of, say, Leonard Hanna and William Milliken?

LEE: No, it was more complex than that. It was a combination of (1) William's own personal taste, (2) Leonard's personal taste, (3) Cleveland was a very conservative community and no real effort had been made except by Tommy Munro. But he didn't have a lot to say about any of this. William ignored him as far as the development of the collection went. They were very conservative. They really didn't have any liking for or knowledge of more contemporary expression.

The major contemporary event at Cleveland, which William developed from 1919 to 1920 on, was the May Show, which was the local regional show and confined to artists from Cuyahoga County, nowhere else. That's the show where William really dominated, even rigged his juries to carry on the Cleveland tradition, which was basically a figural tradition. Even when he got a recalcitrant jury, which sometimes put out some of his favorites, he'd get them



back in. He'd put them back in after they left.

And the trustees were very, very recalcitrant. So it's understandable, but it was there. Once I knew that I was probably going to be a director, I began thinking seriously about this. I didn't know about the Hanna bequest at that time. But with the Hanna bequest in, I made a serious effort to get all this thinking about the collection's needs down on paper, with some kind of overview so a long-term program could be used to develop the collections. What other people had noticed about Cleveland, as Ted Richardson had, was that it was a museum with very high quality objects, but with very serious gaps and real weaknesses in collections that should have been strong, such as the old master collection. This, I think--all apologies--it's only fair to say was largely due to William Milliken and because of his dominance over Henry Francis, who was a terribly nice and knowledgeable man but I think very weak. William's confidence permitted him to dominate and determine the old master paintings selections, and he got some very good pictures, but he also got some very poor pictures. There were a lot of pictures he did not get at all when places like Detroit, [Art Institute of] Chicago, and Boston [Museum of Fine Arts] were active in getting them. So there was a lot to be done.



GARDNER: What were some of the things you set out to do? I have some notes based on the essay you wrote. I can see if you remember the essay or I can prompt you, depending on how you feel.

LEE: First of all, I made this chart, sort of rating different departments in the museum. I also made a chart which showed the dedicated accessions money, annual income for the year--anything that was dedicated to prints or drawings, oriental, or so on. Then the free funds, but all dedicated to purchases. So we had a very clear idea of the amount of income available. And then I drew up a third chart, which showed how the income available in the past had been spent for each department--the percentage of total income. It was very interesting, because the decorative arts got a substantial part of the money, and the old master paintings got next, and at the bottom was oriental. I then made a chart showing suggested adjustments in percentages, so as to develop those parts that needed development the most in terms of quantity of money. I changed the 50 percent, more than 50 percent, which decorative arts received. I recommended assigning that to paintings, basically old master paintings, up to the twentieth century. I recommended that oriental, because of the wide advantage in price structure--because oriental things were much less expensive--be increased.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present. The author then goes on to discuss the role of the government in the development of the country. He argues that the government has played a crucial role in the growth of the nation, and that it is essential for the government to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the individual in the development of the country. He argues that the individual has played a crucial role in the growth of the nation, and that it is essential for the individual to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the community in the development of the country. He argues that the community has played a crucial role in the growth of the nation, and that it is essential for the community to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the nation in the development of the world. He argues that the nation has played a crucial role in the growth of the world, and that it is essential for the nation to continue to play this role in the future. The author then discusses the role of the world in the development of the future. He argues that the world has played a crucial role in the growth of the future, and that it is essential for the world to continue to play this role in the future.

It wasn't a wild amount, but it was a substantial amount. As I remember, I think it went from something like 7 or 8 percent up to 20 percent, something like that. I recommended reducing the amount for decorative arts and concentrating it more in certain areas that had not been developed, such as sculpture. We had a wonderful collection of medieval kleine Kunst, but we did not have a wonderful collection of medieval sculpture. We had ignored sculpture largely, and sculpture was very reasonable on the market then, and we made a definite plan to do something about that.

So I tried to analyze the needs of the museum and get it down in readily understandable form so I could convince the trustees that this was a program worth doing and continuing, so we could reexamine it each year to see what we'd done. I also suggested that they mustn't make any hard-and-fast rules, because there always was the opportunity that suddenly arises where you feel you must do something different than your plan, and you've got to allow for that, as when Rembrandt's Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer came up. I tried to bring a degree of, first, analysis of the collection into focus and then tried to bring a degree of rationality into the purchase system and into the relative weight assigned to these things. The assistant curator of education, Edward



B. Henning, I made curator of modern art. He was a painter, and he had exhibited in the May Show. He was knowledgeable about impressionism, postimpressionism, modern painting, and abstract painting.

I began to have a sense too--which was not terribly well formed at that time in '58--that there should be a basic reorganization of the museum's collections in terms of display and in terms of the departmental organization, because the old system had been taken over lock, stock, and barrel from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston: the department of paintings, department of decorative arts, department of ancient arts, department of prints and drawings, department of textiles. This meant that sculpture was under decorative arts. If you have a good curator of decorative arts, the odds are that he is going to be more interested in kleine Kunst than in sculpture. That means that sculpture is automatically shortchanged. If you have a department of paintings and oil paintings, including modern paintings and duecento paintings, the odds are either end of the scale is going to be shortchanged, because the guy who knows early painting isn't going to know modern painting or be sympathetic to it or vice versa.

I was very much aware of my experiences under Valentiner. I was also very much aware of my rather



brief, but still influential, training in anthropology and intellectual history, that art is very important in context. And context is basically an ignorer of media. Secondly, in the history of art in the Orient there is no such thing as a distinction between so-called fine arts and decorative arts, or painting and pottery. In Europe, all through the Middle Ages and up until the baroque period or even until the nineteenth century, it was customary for a great artist to also do work in other media: decorative arts or sculpture and so on. So this distinction was totally artificial. Rather we should go to a cultural, contextual division. So that you would have the department of Far Eastern or Eastern art, oriental art, as it's called; department of ancient art; department of medieval or Renaissance art, because we couldn't really afford to have two separate departments of that; department of baroque and later art; and a department of modern art. Then, because of the medium and the particular conservation requirements, keep department of prints and drawings and keep department of textiles. So this meant that the curator of, for example, medieval and Renaissance art was responsible for all the art within that period.

GARDNER: A lot of art.

LEE: A lot of art, but the--



GARDNER: But it's better than just paintings.

LEE: To me the right kind of person to handle that question is someone who has to deal with all of that art and who isn't just a manuscript man or just a painting man. And fortunately we had in Henry Hawley a superb curator for baroque and later art. Ed Henning was a very effective curator of modern art. We had Bill [William D.] Wixom for medieval and Renaissance art, and he was marvelous, so marvelous that the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] took him away. He's director of the Cloisters now. We had a very good curator for ancient art, Arielle [P.] Kozloff, and before her, Jack [John D.] Cooney, who--we can get to this--was a little bit disappointing. With a great deal of chutzpah, I insisted on being chief curator for oriental art. Dotty [Dorothy G.] Shepherd was a terrific and highly respected curator for Near Eastern art and for textiles. The prints and drawings department was first under Leona [E.] Prasse; then her assistant, Louise [S.] Richards, succeeded her. They were like most prints and drawings curators, very competent. Not inspired, but very competent.

GARDNER: How did you find most of these people? Did you advertise or were they people you knew?

LEE: Well, prints and drawings were in place. Ancient art-- Sylvia Wunderlich had been the curator and editor of



The Bulletin [of the Cleveland Museum of Art], and she retired. I knew Jack Cooney. I knew who he was. He had a very good record developed at the Brooklyn Museum. What I didn't know was that his wife was an alcoholic. There was a big problem involving her, and it affected his work. But he stayed on. After she died he stayed on for a while. His assistant who he found, Arielle Kozloff, and I'm trying to remember-- She really developed from being just an assistant to him. She had some training, but not too much. She really developed on the job. Dotty Shepherd was in place. She had succeeded Gertrude Underhill. She was in place. Henry Francis retired before we made the change in departments, and that's where I got Henry Hawley, who had been in the Winterthur [Museum] program. He started out basically in terms of furniture. He wrote a very good monograph on the eighteenth-century ébéniste Latz. But he was brilliant and a hard worker.

GARDNER: Did you call somebody like that up and say, "Look, I've got this opening"?

LEE: Well, in terms of Bill Wixom, we interviewed. He had been to the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University]. He was recommended. He did not have his doctorate. Henry was interviewed. In the old days, way, way back in the bad old days before World War II, it was

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basically the good old boy network. In the good old days, which was between World War II and about 1980 or a little earlier, it was not a good old boy network but it was a restricted network, really based upon evaluation by various people, regardless of their social origins, of people coming up in the field who were very interesting, very good. It was a little bit like a peer review, but not this obsession with openness and democratic selection and equal opportunity, etc. It was within-the-profession evaluation. That was how it worked basically. And I think it worked very well. I think some of the best curators that have come up-- In the old days, oftentimes they were German imports like George Swarzenski at Boston, Valentiner when he came over. Well, "Chick" [A. Everett] Austin was a native development. But that system worked awfully well.

Where it didn't work well-- Oddly enough, we had an absolute nightmare in trying to find a librarian. I told you they were in place when I came there. Charlotte Vanderveer was the associate librarian; Ella Tallman was the librarian. They were at each other's throats all the time. Ella was a sort of gentle but firm and evenhanded type. Charlotte was a big Dutch dike, that's what she was. Not to make a pun, but she was a Dutch dike and very domineering, but with an absolute genius and energy at

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finding books. She was a great acquisitions librarian and she succeeded Ella. But then when Charlotte retired, we tried to get someone and we hit one lemon after another, all recommended highly. This, that, and the other thing, until we finally got Daphne [Cross] Roloff, who was very good. But then she went to Chicago and then we got Jack [John] Brown, and he was terrific, a little bit abrasive to a lot of people, but a terrific librarian. He was picked off by Art Institute of Chicago library. Now they have a very good librarian that came in after I retired [Ann B. Abid].

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TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

JULY 13, 1992

GARDNER: This is in many ways part two of this interview, since it's being resumed after something like two and a half months and testing our memories. As I indicated, in my reading-over of the final tape that we did last time, we left off just before I was going to ask you about-- We left off in the middle of your becoming the director [of the Cleveland Museum of Art] and the changes you implemented. And the next one I wanted to ask you about was the conservation department. In your essay, that's something you talked about. So if you could tell me about your thoughts on that and the importance of conservation.

LEE: Well, let's begin with the institution of a conservation department, because of course the bequest of Leonard [C.] Hanna [Jr.], with the endowment for both operations and for purchases, made things really quite, quite different. And consequently, there were many things that were now possible that would not have been possible before. But the fact remains that there had been previously no effort to have any kind of in-house conservation capability. The way in which, for instance, paintings were cleaned--if they required it, and many of them did--or repaired is that they were sent out to New



York to the studio of a former German restorer in Berlin who had worked for Detroit [Institute of Arts] and was a private restorer in New York, William Suhr. It was sent there. Consequently, the curators or the director or whoever was interested in that particular work had no way of observing the continuity of cleaning and restoration. There was no real supervision. And when Suhr did come to Cleveland occasionally to do a painting, he did his work in the trustees' room, next to the director's office. I remember particularly the peculiar nature of the arrangement, because Mr. Suhr, when he came in in the morning to the trustees' room to do his work, always wanted to have a fresh rose in a glass container, and a plate of chocolates should be on hand while he was doing his restoration work. It was touching, [laughter] but it wasn't precisely-- It was the further extreme from science, let us say. [laughter]

So in the extension exhibitions department we had two preparators, who were Joseph [G.] Alvarez, who was a painting restorer in a way, and Fred [Frederick L.] Hollendonner, who was a very good local artist, and he did repairs and restorations on objects for the extension exhibitions department. It was one of the quite unusual things in the museum that had been going on for a long time, since the twenties, in connection with the school



program. They had developed a collection called the extension exhibition collection, starting out with things that would be particularly interesting to young children, such as American Indian art, primitive art, textiles, etc. Gradually it had developed by gift and by-- They had some money of their own, which incidentally had been given to them by the president under whom I became director, Harold T. Clark. We've discussed him before. He was very much interested in this kind of what we now call outreach program. They had developed quite a collection and it was used a great deal going out to different schools. They had cases and different schools and so on, and this entailed inevitable damage and wear and tear. So they had to have two preparators, and that was Joe and Fred.

But they were very good, and they were chafing at the bit because the curator for the extension exhibitions department, Doris Dunleavy, was a hard taskmaster and a rather inflexible type, sort of a librarian type in the classic sense. They were very unhappy. So I said, "Well, let's move the preparators there and I'll establish a general conservation department, and let's see if we can do something about getting people in for it." So we established a new department. We got in a couple of younger people in the extension exhibitions department and we set Alvarez and Hollendonner up in quarters of their

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own as our first conservation department. And it worked out quite well for a while until it obviously needed expansion--that came later. But it did have the great advantage that every day if there was a painting being cleaned or an object being repaired or studied, that the curator concerned could pop in very easily and see what was going on. That was, as far as I think any museum goes, an absolute necessity in order to have the kind of continuity and supervision and give-and-take between the conservators and curators and in order to get the best possible results.

Now, we've already discussed the library, right?

GARDNER: Yes.

LEE: About developing that. The education department? Have we--?

GARDNER: Yes, we've talked about the education department. The next one I have is musical arts.

LEE: Oh, well, musical arts had been an ongoing thing and very successful. I think I mentioned earlier that Béla Bartók was in Cleveland at the Cleveland Institute of Music and he did programs at the museum. When I was a graduate student, I met him several times at lunch there. Arthur Quimby, who was the curator of music, was a good solid New England type, and he was very, very good and got a lot of people in. He was succeeded by Walter Blodgett,



who was a very active and volatile person, who developed it even further.

There was a couple that had been with the Sherwin-Williams Paint Company. Gartner. Mr. [Ernest L.] and Mrs. [Louise M.] Gartner. That company had been absorbed by [E. I.] Du Pont [de Nemours and Company], and they had moved to Delaware, to Winterthur. They had a considerable fortune, and they wrote me one day and said that they were interested in making a substantial gift to the music department. So I went to see them, and they were indeed anxious. They at first wanted to tie it down rather completely to just operating money for concerts and so forth. And I talked to them at some length about the fact that the music department was getting larger and their programs were more ambitious and they still had an inadequate auditorium in the 1916 building, which was the center of their operation, and that we really ought to plan ahead and think about the possibility that there would be a major addition again to the museum after the 1958 one, at which time there would have to be some kind of new auditorium. They were interested in that idea, and so they made the bequest flexible enough so that some of the principal could be used for the cost of an auditorium and music department in any possible future development. So that augured very well for the future. And the

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1797

bequest, I've forgotten the exact amount, but was, I would think, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 or \$3 million. I can't remember exactly. And also, in the planning for that, for which Walter Blodgett was very anxious-- He had had plans well worked out so that he could have a far more ambitious and flexible music program, with some dance possibilities and so on. Choral too.

For a while after the 1958 wing was finished, we got by with having some programs of a larger scale than could be held in the old auditorium, which only seated something like 350 or so, and in what we called the garden court, which was the court made by the addition of the '58 building onto the '16 building, which had a very nice big garden area open to the sky and rather good acoustics, it turned out. There was a stone screen put up specifically to act as a reflector for possible outdoor concerts. And the music department got by with that in terms of major programs in the period of clement weather, which in Cleveland is not all that long. [laughter] Now, where do we go from here?

GARDNER: The next thing I have on my list is the museum designer, William [E.] Ward.

LEE: Yes. Well, in this general restructuring of the museum-- It seemed to me it was beginning to be apparent in many museums, and we felt that more attention had to be



paid in a more specialized way to the problems of installation of special exhibitions, but also the permanent collection. It just wasn't enough to have it sort of informally handled by this, that, or the other person. And I was very much opposed to the idea which some museums had of bringing in outside designers for each exhibition. I thought this had to be, first of all, an in-house thing, because that's the way the style of the museum is set is by the work of the people within the museum. And secondly, it's much cheaper.

One of the reasons I got along quite well with the trustees was that-- Some of them claimed I was too parsimonious, that I didn't, you know, go out and spend, think big, or something like that. But I felt very strongly that the income from the museum should especially go for those things that are most particularly the responsibility of the museum: the development of the collections, meaning purchase and conservation; the display of the material, which meant attention to the methods of display; and the elucidation of the collection through the educational department and through the writings of the curators, etc., etc. All the income really should concentrate on those areas. To use income sort of offhand for this or that, for entertainment or what I call glitzy operations, big PR [public relations]



and so forth, I thought was a waste of money that could have been much better and responsibly spent on the main purposes of the museum.

Anyhow, that prompted us to decide that we would have a design department, a museum designer, and Bill Ward-- He taught also at the Cleveland Institute of Art, William Ward. He was a very good watercolorist, an excellent calligrapher. He taught calligraphy at the art institute, and he had much to do with design. In the museum, he was an assistant in the oriental department when I first came in '52, and in '58 that was his title. He was interested in Indian miniatures and Indian art in a kind of nonscholarly way. He was an enthusiast for Indian art, and his wife [Evelyn Svec] was a very, very good textile artist. She was a wonderful weaver and he was a dedicated and sensitive artist. So I said, "Bill, you're unhappy here with the growing size of the oriental department and its program and its new curators coming in. But you're a wonderful designer. How would you like to be museum designer?" He said, oh, he'd love it. So we said, "Okay, you're the museum designer." And we gave him an office and an area where he could work.

We developed a museum design department, so that for the first time instead of the director and the curator either agreeing or squabbling about what was to be done,



you had the director and the designer and the curator squabbling. But the point was that the designer had a very strong and professional hand to play. And it worked very, very well, because the attention of the director then shifted from squabbling with whoever. He then became interested in establishing peace and a creative relationship between the curator and the designer. So he became a kind of peacemaker, arbiter, etc., in this relationship. And it worked.

Bill is still the designer. I think he's due to retire this year. He's been the designer there for more than thirty years, well over thirty years. He developed models of his special exhibition galleries. We didn't go in for these fancy full-scale models that some museums delight in, with everything done up in a very professional way and costing mints and mints of money. We emphasized the use of color to suggest environments of, say, China or Italy or German baroque. Scale was one of the things, and the use of partitions to suggest environments, but not trying to literally duplicate, reproduce, what I call a habitat group kind of thing: one, because I really think it's stupid, and, two, it's very expensive. Again, I think it's very, very wasteful.

I think I mentioned--stop me if I have--that we had in the new 1958 building a special exhibition gallery,



which was designed specifically for special exhibitions. [J.] Byers Hayes was the architect for that building. He worked on it. It was our first effort to have a flexible, all-purpose gallery that could be changed easily by built-in things for change. We had overhead connections for stainless steel rods to support and to stay and hold partitions. We had sockets in the floor to take the posts for the partitions. Also, every other socket had electricity, so that we had cases designed that fit in there that could be moved anywhere and could have their own illumination. And the partitions were designed to be painted and so forth. It worked fairly well, but it was really our first essay in this thing. As a matter of fact, it wasn't done very much elsewhere. There were various efforts at it, but it hadn't really been worked out, I think. It became much better in the [Marcel] Breuer wing, and Bill worked that out.

So we were able to have major exhibitions like the Japanese Decorative Style, the Treasures from Medieval France, and so forth and so on. Each exhibition looked the same, in a sense, because the galleries were fixed, though flexible. But also they looked different because of the scale of the partitions and the different color choices and spaces involved. And Bill was a genius at this. He was very good. He was a little-- People



sometimes complained about his color being a little too drab. On the other hand, you go to some exhibitions where they pour on the scarlet and chrome yellow and Swedish blue, and you wonder where you are. And then Bill was also responsible for working with the curator for installation of the permanent collection. So there was a constant relationship going on between the designer and the curator, and with the director involved where necessary. It improved the appearance of the collections and also the flexibility, but it did not drastically increase costs. So that was another first, having the design department, and it worked very well.

GARDNER: Did you ever have any real knock-down-drag-outs between the curator and Bill Ward?

LEE: Not really. I can't remember anything that was actionable. There would be occasional harsh words and some pouting problems occasionally. But basically it worked out. And if there was a problem, the director was ready and willing to try to arbitrate or simply, if there couldn't be an arbitration, to decide which way we're going to go. It was the same thing with purchases. Our policy was very, very simple with the curators. If the curator wanted something for the department and the director did not want it, we didn't get it. If the director saw something that he wanted that he thought



would be important for the department, other than the oriental department, and the curator did not want it, we did not get it. But if both the curator and the director were in agreement that that was a piece that really ought to come, we almost always got it, because we would unite and go to the trustees, the accessions committee of the board, and the department and the director would be in full agreement, and we would move through with it. That kind of mutual veto system worked very well in various areas where you could have problems develop.

GARDNER: The next one I have on my list is the relationship with Case Western Reserve [University], the art history program. And I guess that ties back into some of the things that we've talked about in education.

LEE: Well, there had always been a kind of relationship, because when Dr. [Thomas] Munro came as curator of education in 1928 or 1929, about the same time William [M.] Milliken became director, Tommy was a joint appointment of the museum and Case Western Reserve University. The courses I took and his supervision for my doctorate were part of that program between CMA [Cleveland Museum of Art] and Western Reserve University. So there had been a connection. And I had been adjunct professor at the University of Washington when I was out in Seattle. I taught there, and I felt very strongly that curators



should be involved somewhat in the educational process, that it wasn't just the responsibility of the education department, because the education department had perhaps sometimes different orientations. There were educators, there were artists, and there were art historians. But the curator was primarily an art historian and was trained primarily in objects. I encouraged people to teach courses with the university if they wished to. When I came there as curator in '52, I began teaching occasional courses at the university in connection with oriental art. And when Bill Wixom came as curator for medieval art, he loved to teach and he would give courses with the university. Henry Hawley, when he came, began, and Ed [Edward B.] Henning, who was-- Have I said anything about Ed? I have.

GARDNER: Yes. We'll talk about him more--

LEE: When he moved from the education department to be curator of modern art, he continued to teach courses in modern art in connection with the university. Well, it seemed to me that now that we had these larger capabilities because of our endowment, this relationship could be expanded and perhaps made a little more formal. I tried to encourage this to be done. The university was interested in it. But it worked only to a degree. There was always something about this joint program that was not



totally successful. In part, of course, the university has its way of working, has its red tape and its traditions, has its faculty committees, and has a very strongly developed sort of university code of morals, ethics, and procedures. The museum is a somewhat different kind of institution, and these things sometimes didn't mesh in a way that made everything completely satisfactory. Of course a great deal depended upon the goodwill and the interest of the professors over there. And the university was not too wealthy. They were not that much interested in the history of art. They added one or two members of the faculty, and it gradually began to develop to a certain extent. I haven't followed what's happened since '83 too carefully, but I think it's still functioning and functioning reasonably well.

I think the university has developed their side a little bit further and I think there is now-- We've had some good people come through there who have come out with Ph.D.'s and have gone on into the museum field or into university work. There are quite a few people who come to Case Western Reserve in the joint program with the museum because it was always predicated on one particular element being a major part. That was the use of the permanent collection, that the orientation of teaching of the history of art was to include, as a substantial part of



the program, the use of the collections. Now, this had been true with the educational department in the museum when Tommy first came, all through the thirties and forties, that the education department used the collections. When I went there for my Ph.D., Dr. Munro used the collections, but Professor Donaldson, who was a Princeton [University] Ph.D. in Italian Renaissance sculpture--and I took some courses from him--basically did not use the collections at all. But the program, as it has developed, has contained a very strong component of use of collections and teaching, not only for just study, but also as the subject of papers. We developed the concept that a Ph.D. dissertation could be a substantial scholarly catalog of a coherent collection within the museum. And so, for example, Kleinhenz got his Ph.D. and wrote a doctoral dissertation which was a catalog of the early Chinese ceramics in the museum collection. Linda York Leach, who's done very well, is in England now and recently did the catalog of the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin. Her Ph.D. dissertation was on the Indian miniatures in the Cleveland Museum of Art collection, which is published in a substantial book form. And so on. There have been others. In the field of Gandharan-Iranian art Martha Carter wrote a dissertation on Soma. Then there was [Thomas E.] Donaldson. He didn't



do much on the Indian sculpture collection, but he wrote his dissertation on medieval Orissan sculpture in India. And there have been others: Hou-Mei Ishida on Wang Fu, Sheila Bills on Sino-Tibetan sculpture. These theses are not ordinary doctoral dissertations, but it is, I think, a very useful approach and one that is particularly appropriate for people that are going on in museum work, art museum work.

When I came into art museum work at all, even as a volunteer back in 1939 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, it was almost unheard of for a museum curator to have a Ph.D. Even a master's degree was very rare. Most of the curators in American museums in the twenties and thirties were A.B.'s from Harvard [University], Yale [University], Princeton, maybe occasionally from somewhere else. But that basically was what it was. The university people universally looked upon the curators as dilettantes and amateurs, and the curators looked upon the university professors as pedants and picky librarians. That attitude, while it has been tempered somewhat, is still around. You find it quite often, and I suppose it's natural. But I've always felt that we ought to learn from the animal world, since humans don't seem to be able to control their passions very well, that you have to have a symbiotic relationship. As William Blake said--I think he



said it--"One law for the lion and lamb is tyranny."

You've got to have university people working with museum people, and they've got to be different because of their responsibilities, but they also have to learn to work together. So that was one of the things we tried to do, as well, in the joint program with the university. Now what do we want?

GARDNER: The next on my list-- You mentioned briefly the extension division. As you said, it dated back a long way.

LEE: Yes. I said something about that in relation to our filching the two preparators from the extension department. Now, they were anxious to get out. And I've said something about the background and the use of that extension exhibition. Well, again, we tried to enlarge it and develop it a little bit further for its own purposes. The previous system had been that they worked with the public school system. Each school had an exhibition case that was assigned to that school, and the extension exhibitions would change the case every six to eight weeks or so, depending-- And they worked with the teachers and programmed the material in the case to go with something that the students were studying at the time. It was successful, but limited. As the school system developed and as problems began to develop in the school system



because of large numbers of students--the population explosion in the younger students--and as the demands in the school curricula for primary and secondary school became more and more oriented to social subjects and practical subjects, the proportion of energy and funds expended for the arts in the public schools became smaller and smaller.

Leonard Hanna had always been interested in Karamu House, which is a black settlement school. It's a settlement house that was over near the [Cleveland] Play House, between the museum and the Cleveland Play House, and they did work with talented black children. They also had programs for the black community in dance and music and the arts. Leonard had always been interested in that and had substantially contributed to the development of Karamu House. I think it was in '58 or '59 we set up in Karamu House a small gallery for extension exhibitions to use for changing displays.

You know, Cleveland is an extraordinary city in many ways. One of the extraordinary things about it is the division between the east side and the west side. The Cuyahoga River cuts north into Lake Erie. West of the Cuyahoga is the west side and east is the east side. The east side includes the downtown, the major downtown area. But it was almost as if you had a Chinese wall running



along the Cuyahoga River along into Lake Erie, because people on the west side really didn't have much to do with people on the east side. The west side was where a very large part of the ethnic population was. Very large Hungarian, Polish populations. We had several problems at the museum in our guards, for example, with the Hungarians, because the Hungarian population became very large after the putting down of the revolution in Hungary.

GARDNER: In 1956?

LEE: In the late forties. One of our guards was a former colonel in the Hungarian army, the precommunist Hungarian army. His name was Colonel Pohly, and he just did not like black people. I began to hear these stories, and finally we confronted him. He said, "They have no right coming to the museum." I said, "Well, I'm sorry. You just can't have that kind of attitude and be a guard here. That's all wrong, and you are herewith requested to resign. If you don't resign, I'm going to fire you." So we got rid of him. This is a footnote to this problem. He was Hungarian and there were problems.

The east side was where the heavier black population was, and when I became director, we had finally, at long last-- Now, the building superintendent was the brother of the building superintendent at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the brother also of the building superintendent



at the Art Institute of Chicago. It was sort of a-- Not a mafia, but an Irish family, clan kind of thing. Things were not going terribly well. We had a new building superintendent from within the museum, because Mr. McCabe retired. And next, we got a new building superintendent in from outside, which caused a little bit of problem. The assistant building superintendent had been the foreman before, and he became assistant building superintendent. His name was Joe Kraynak, a Polish fellow and reasonably good, but very, very flighty. I mean very flighty. The next person in line for foreman after a bit was a black man, Ezekiel Williams, who was very good, a very, very nice man and a very good worker. So when the previous foreman left, I made Zeke the foreman. This was about, I'd say, '61, '62, '63, and I had a deputation from the union representatives saying that they would not work under Mr. Williams. I said, "Well, that's just most unfortunate. That means we're going to have to get a whole bunch of new people to work under Mr. Williams." They couldn't believe it. They simply couldn't believe it. But they knuckled under, and we finally, I think, made the thing work. But it was a touchy business. Cleveland was very, very conservative. Of course, everyplace else was too.

GARDNER: It's very interesting, because the museum was in

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TO THE YEAR 1780
LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAULS CHURCH-YARD, 1787.

an odd middle place. Its primary support came not from ethnics and not from the blacks--

LEE: No.

GARDNER: It came from a group of Clevelanders--

LEE: Nor from the city. It came from Clevelanders who were of the old New England tradition of noblesse oblige. But Cleveland was, I think I said earlier on, a little bit different and a little special, because the Cleveland people who supported the museum--and they supported it handsomely--didn't put strings on things. They really supported, and they gave and gave the money for the purpose of the museum. They were not interested in personal aggrandizement or fame. They believed in hiring professionals to run the place and letting them run it. And that's unusual. That combination is unusual. It really was the reason why it was such a wonderful place to be and why it was so different. To a certain extent this was true at Toledo [Museum of Art] and it was true to a certain extent at Kansas City [Art Institute]. It was not true at Detroit [Institute of Arts]. It was not true at Saint Louis [Art Museum]. It was different. But that was the tradition.

Now, beginning in the sixties, the late sixties and then on, you had the beginnings of change and so on. The museum had fortunately always been multicultural, if

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BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. BENTLEY, AT THE
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OF NASSAU AND NINTH STREETS.
1825.

that's the term people want to use. It had always been multicultural. As a matter of fact, I think I said earlier, one of the things I remember so well was that the director of the Detroit Museum, E. P. [Edgar Preston] Richardson, told me, "But Cleveland's not a very interesting museum. It represents every tradition except our own." [laughter] Well, that was a strength too, because we had strong collections of art all over the world. It was, I think, a little easier for the museum, and also because of the education department with its Carnegie grants and interest in the school system, and Leonard's interest in the black community and Karamu-- The traditional sort of closed circle was tempered to a degree, and I think it was effective and it helped the museum to make a transition from the ancien régime to the new order, as it were.



TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

JULY 13, 1992

GARDNER: The next thing I had on the list was operations. And I mentioned the name Albert Grossman before we turned on the tape, and that lit a spark.

LEE: Let's first do publications, because that's carrying on from the same general type of thing.

GARDNER: Fine.

LEE: The Hanna bequest made it possible to look at the publications department. We had previously done occasional publications catalogs, but Leonard had, through his Hanna Fund, underwritten shows that basically had been organized by the Museum of Modern Art. We had the big Picasso show. We had a big Bonnard show. This was all in the forties and early fifties. The principal publication of the museum had always been The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art, which was a monthly publication, and it had glossy outer covers and then mat paper inside. Usually it ran from eight pages to--if it were a thicker bulletin--sixteen and with a rather small format. It was used for articles on new acquisitions. It was used for description of special exhibitions. It was a kind of an all-purpose thing. There was some good scholarship, but on a very sort of restricted scale, and some good popular



things, but also there was an awful lot of puffery and also routine things that ought to be in some different kind of publication, a news and calendar. So we decided that we needed to improve the publications program and develop it further and change some of its ways. So we made the bulletin slightly larger in size and we established a newsletter which took away from the bulletin all sorts of ephemera. The bulletin became a reasonably good scholarly but popular report about the development of the collections, acquisitions, or groups of things that made sense. The thickness, the length of the bulletin, was increased considerably too. It varied from twenty-eight, thirty-two, thirty-six pages.

The editor of the bulletin previously had been also the curator of ancient art. (When I came as curator of oriental art in '52, I was also put in charge of but not curator of ancient art.) And we needed an editor. We needed somebody who would supervise a good publications program full-time, including some good museum catalogs of the collections and of special exhibitions. We felt very strongly that, with this new affluence, we should take it as a responsibility and as a charge that we were going to do more in organizing on our own special exhibitions that were required to be done that would make a contribution to art history and to the understanding of art in Cleveland



and around the United States. So we got Dr. Merald [E.] Wrolsted, who was a very well trained and creative editor, very much interested in typography. He was the publisher of and editor of-- I've forgotten the name of the magazine, but a magazine that specializes in the problems associated with book making and typography. He's a nationally recognized person. He came to be our editor, and he had an assistant.

We went to work, and when, for instance, I did the Chinese Landscape Painting exhibition in 1953, one of the first things I did-- I'd been thinking about it for a long time, and I just couldn't wait to do it, because I thought there had never been an exhibition on Chinese landscape painting. We did it and we were able to get out a catalog, which was later redesigned and reprinted, because there was a demand for it in paperback--Dover Press. The first catalog was a real penny-pinching operation. This was '53, and we had to do it on a very, very tight budget. It was printed up at the Ann Arbor [University of] Michigan Press and it was done in a fairly inexpensive kind of litho. But it sold out and it was redone.

The first exhibition we did under the new dispensation was, I think, Japanese Decorative Style. Merald and I talked together about what kind of catalogs we wanted to do. I remember when I was a student I was



impressed with the sort of sensibility and common sense in the Museum of Modern Art catalogs that were done in the thirties under Alfred Barr: Cubism and Abstract Art; the African exhibition Jim [James Johnson] Sweeney did [African Negro Art]; Surrealism that James Thrall Soby did. They were good catalogs, they were accurate, but they weren't pretentiously scholarly. They were easy to handle; they were a size that you could hold in your hand without breaking your wrist. They simply were so damn sensible. And Merald agreed with me. So the first one we did, I think, was Japanese Decorative Style, and it was very successful. And we went on from that.

We began doing our own shows and we had very good success. Merald--he died not long ago, very tragic--was there all the way through. I think he produced a very distinguished lot of things. I hate to say this in this kind of way, but I think the proof of the success of our publications program, especially in our bulletin and our catalog, was that we never ever won a prize from the American museum association [American Association of Museums] for our publications because they weren't the kind of trendy, glitzy things that always got the prizes every year. Merald and I used to sit and commiserate with each other about how the world was going to hell in a basket as far as publications went. But I think the



publications department did a very, very good job in the catalogs that they did.

GARDNER: In shaping the bulletin, were there any models that you had in mind?

LEE: Well, the museum bulletin is interesting. Somebody could actually write a very good long article or small book on art museum bulletins, the history of art museum bulletins. The models for bulletin publications before World War II were, let us say-- The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, published a very sensible sort of old-fashioned, two-column-type, tall, narrow format bulletin with very substantial articles by their very good curators. They had George Swarzenski there for medieval art and the classical and Egyptian departments were famous. Painting was not all that great, but the oriental department was. And they produced a very substantial scholarly bulletin regularly month after month after month. The Metropolitan [Museum of Art] did one that was rather more like the Cleveland bulletin, sort of trying to do two things at once: scholarly articles on collections and news and information as well.

Most museums had bulletins, but they were sporadic. The only bulletins that came out month after month before World War II were the Boston museum bulletin, the Metropolitan Museum of Art bulletin, the Cleveland Museum



of Art bulletin, and that actually was about it. Every museum had what they called a bulletin, and they came out and they were bound up in volumes in the library each year. But these volumes-- You would just take a look, walk down the stacks, and you'd see, some would be thick, some would be thin. It was sporadic.

GARDNER: Monthly is a terrific burden for an institution to--

LEE: Right, but I think it's one way-- The members of the museum liked to get, you know, a monthly thing. What happened, of course, is that after World War II, with the spread of interest, with the cultural explosion, so-called-- The idea of popularization, which I'm for-- As a matter of fact, this recent book cites me as being the chief popularizer of oriental art in the United States for twenty or thirty years. I believe in the essay. I believe in writing books for educated laymen. I believe in writing books for children's education. What I find difficult to accept is the idea that you should write things that are designed primarily to entertain and be popular. That is, I think in order to learn about art, you have to do a little work. I think in order to learn about anything, you have to do a little work. You have to do some reading; you have to do some looking; you have to do some comparison. You can't just sort of sit back and

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have a tape flow over you and learn anything. After the war, we began to get this development of popular, entertaining publications. So the Boston bulletin has gone with the wind. They may have an occasional bulletin, but I don't think they have much more than that. The Metropolitan bulletin became, as Cleveland's, larger and they went in for color in a big way. We went in for color on the cover only.

But to show you just one little point to indicate how these things really percolate through the whole fabric of the museum if you're concerned about these things: Merald and I had a strict rule that you did not reproduce a work of art in color as a decoration on the cover of the bulletin. If you did, you showed the thing either as an integral work or you used a detail. But you did not imprint on the reproduction of the work of art, because that represented a transgression, an invasion of the integrity of the object. I'm sorry to say that now the Cleveland bulletin does this regularly. And as a matter of fact, recently they have begun using silver tone and copper tone and so forth things on works that have nothing to do with that at all. It's just a means of making the thing look more like something that belongs on a coffee table.

The Metropolitan bulletin has become much glossier



and really is very informative. It's very well done. They have a lot of good factual information. A lot of the essays, I think, are usually quite well written. But something's been lost I think in the gradual disappearance of the museum bulletin. I mean, there are the Metropolitan Museum Studies, which are scholarly, primarily for a scholarly audience. The National Gallery [of Art] has an occasional publication of that type; they don't have a regular bulletin. Philadelphia [Museum of Art] does not. They used to. The Art Institute of Chicago does not have a regular bulletin, but they have a regular kind of museum studies thing which is very scholarly. But the thing that has disappeared in my experience is the thing that corresponds in literature to essays by, you know, people like V. S. Pritchett or E. B. White or the sort of literate, pointed, serious, well-written introduction to a given subject or object or whatever. That's more or less disappeared. What you have is either computer-written scholarly publications that look exactly like a compilation from the computer and are dreadful to read-- You can look up all kinds of nifty information and so forth, but the general public, certainly not. That kind of directed essay is gone. I think the bulletin was a part of that thing, and it's gone. I think it's a real loss.



Catalogs, since we're on publications now-- I was in charge of the Far Eastern section of the Circa 1492 exhibition held on the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus.

GARDNER: How time flies when you're having a good time.

LEE: Yes, how time flies. That catalog is monstrous. It really is a physical problem for anybody over fifty to hold. You can't clutch it between your two fingers. It will fall right out, and if it falls on your foot, it will break your toe. They're monstrous, those telephone books. [J.] Carter Brown was very unhappy when I made, I thought, a lighthearted allusion to the weight of the 1492 catalog at the press preview conference. But it's true. Those books that you can carry with you, collections of essays, to the doctor's office or the hospital where you're going to wait forever for them to tell whether you're well or not, or the things that you can take where you're going to have some leisure time or when you're in an airplane-- You can't take the catalog for 1492!

And there was an even bigger one. The Nelson Gallery [of Art], Kansas City, had this big exhibition of Tung Ch'i-ch'ang and his circle, a late sixteenth-, early seventeenth-century Chinese painter of some importance. It's a two-volume catalog that is three times the weight and size of the 1492 thing. I think there is something,

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FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY
JOSEPH NEALE
OF THE BARR

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.
BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY
JOSEPH NEALE
AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP,
IN THE MARKET PLACE.
1780.

in terms of reason and balance, that is gone in this respect. And I think this bulletin has simply become almost extinct.

GARDNER: Well, the catalog, in a sense, as you describe it, has changed its mission as well.

LEE: Sure.

GARDNER: It is no longer something that the exhibit goer picks up to carry around and see the exhibit. It's rather something, first of all, to take home, but second of all, something to memorialize the exhibition and the people who put it together.

LEE: Yes. I think the audio thing has in a sense simply--

GARDNER: Oh! The audio tour.

LEE: The audio tour, which incidently-- Let me begin by saying that we knew about the audio tour thing.

Acoustiguide came to us and told us all about the wonderful things they could do for us. And I was somewhat suspicious, but we said-- We had staff meetings. We really had regular staff meetings every week and a major staff meeting once a month--that is, it was the smaller group once a week--and we discussed all these things.

This wasn't all just ukase from on high in the director's office. When Acoustiguide came, we had a long discussion about it. Finally we said, "Okay, we'll give it a try." So we let them come in, and we said, "This is going to be



a trial run. We're going to have it for six months and we're not going to charge for this thing, so how much is the bill going to be?" And so on.

Then our education department, along with Ed Henning, the curator of modern art, produced, worked out, an Acoustiguide of the modern collection of highlights from the twentieth-century paintings. We had a questionnaire drawn up which we gave to people and asked them to please leave it at the desk after they turned in their Acoustiguide, or if they forgot it, please mail it to us, post-free. The tape tried to explain very clearly what impressionism was attempting to do and how they differed, different artists, in their usage of it and about postimpressionism and the early period of the early twentieth century. Ed's a very good educator in this area. His catalog Fifty Years of Modern Art, 1916-1966, that he did along with the Treasures from Medieval France on the occasion of our fiftieth anniversary, is a very, very useful book for a student and for a layman in understanding what was going on in that fifty-year period. Well, he did a good job on the tape. We analyzed all the replies. And it was cataclysmic. Nobody could tell you anything. I mean, I forget the statistics, but it was something like less than 10 percent of the people who responded had gotten anything out of that damn thing.

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IN TWO VOLUMES
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
OF THE BARRISTER AT LAW
IN GREAT BRITAIN
LONDON: PRINTED BY J. BARNES, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, 1795.
AND BY J. BARNES, ST. MARTIN'S LANE, 1795.

Just salient features. Questions asked--nothing. So we said, "Thank you very much, but no thank you. You may take it away." Well, we got a terrible reputation around the circuit, because everywhere Acoustiguide went they'd say what a stodgy institution Cleveland was.

We tried to improve labels. We worked a lot on that. That's another subject for a book: labeling of pictures. How much can you put on a label? What should go on a label? What should be its size in relation to the painting? I love those institutions-- Toledo [Museum of Art] always used to give me a bang when you'd go in the big room and there'd be a sign above the painting in letters two feet high, a foot and a half high, which say "Rembrandt," "Velázquez," you know, and so forth. And then there'd be that picture below it. Then you go up and see the label and-- It still hasn't been thought out.

People do like to read labels. I would say the proportions of people who go to art exhibitions are approximately as follows: curious people who just come in because they want to know what's going on, maybe 10 or 15 percent; serious people who are laymen, not scholars but laymen who are interested in art, the visual arts, maybe let's say another 10 percent. But the vast majority of people that come in are basically word or sound oriented, not visually oriented. Pictures don't move. They see a



lot of television, but pictures don't move. They're inanimate. And these people are word oriented or sound oriented.

Now, it's fashionable at exhibitions, you have these very large labels before a section which tell you all the background of the thing. I spent a lot of time-- My prejudices are prejudices, but by God, they're well founded. [laughter] I watched, for example, when the Metropolitan Museum got that medieval manuscript from the Rothschild collection of the famous Book of Hours-- They set up outside in the medieval area a special display for that exhibition. They had a big octagonal surround, with color transparencies lit from behind, of all the illuminated pages of the manuscript on the outside of the kiosk. And in the inside the manuscript itself, the original manuscript, was in a case in the middle of the octagon. I stood there for an hour, just around there, observing what people were doing. Almost no one looked at the original manuscript in the middle, almost no one. They spent all their time going around, looking at the transparencies or reading the type. The idea that you might have a small book, you know, that would explain all these things and you would carry that around and read it, that's gone. They ain't word oriented that way. They're word oriented in terms of a display. A screen is the best



of all. But a label displays something.

We haven't worked it out. Because if there's one thing that is true of the visual arts it's that, like anything else, it's a language. You have to learn what the words are, what the letters are, what the grammar is, and so forth, if you're going to understand what you're looking at, and we aren't doing that. They tried to do it. Tommy Munro was one of the people that was interested in developing this kind of thing intelligently. In its funny, quirky way, the Barnes Foundation--that old crazy Dr. Albert [C.] Barnes--was trying to do it too, according to their lights, to get people to understand how things visually were put together. There were all kinds of things that could be done, but it hasn't been done, and I think that we know really very few-- A very few people know more and more and more about art and around art, but I think the number or percentage of people who understand the visual arts qua visual arts has declined. How did we get off on this? We were talking about labeling?

GARDNER: And catalogs.

LEE: Catalogs and so forth. All right. Now we come to operations.

GARDNER: Before you do operations, I have one other publication that I'd like to ask you about, and that's the handbook.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, 1773.

LEE: Ah, the handbook. The handbook. We had many staff meetings about the handbook, and what I've been saying about the Museum of Modern Art publication thing had something to do with our thinking. The idea, we all agreed, for the handbook was that the handbook was to be something that was not necessarily useful in terms of text. It could be useful in going around the exhibition, in order for you to make your notes near an image of the thing, so that you could remember and deal with what you had seen after you had gone. Secondly, what they call sometimes a picture book, a brief guide to the collection-- But that did not do the job. If you have what you think is a great collection that has been worked on by a dozen or more people carefully and conscientiously over a period of fifty years or more and you have what is considered to be, by many scholars in various fields, one of the choice assemblages of important works of art of many different cultures, by God, there should be some way that you can get this into people's hands. Maybe they might come to the museum because they could see all this stuff. It's no good just to make a selection. You've got to have as much as possible and it also has to be arranged some way. So we battled it out and worked it out.

We decided it should be a size that would fit into an overcoat pocket (Cleveland is a bad climate area); that it



should have as many sharp, small illustrations of the key works in the museum as possible within this size requirement, which meant somewhere give or take a thousand was the sort of number we had up here; and that it should be arranged in a way that reflected the organization of the collection. This brings us back to the rearrangement of the departments and brings us to, as we finish talking about the handbook, the reorganization of the collections, but organized that way so that it could be followed as one went through the museum. Also it should be tough physically, because there's nothing worse than having a handbook that falls apart. So the first one we did was the one you probably know, which has the green linen cover, utilitarian, not sexy at all, but it's tough. Mine's held together very well. And that we came out with. In Europe, there are a couple of museums that have done that. In Japan, they've done it more recently. They've picked it up, I think, from some places. But then we enlarged it as the collections grew enormously and rapidly because of the Hanna bequest. Now they've got a new handbook, which has just come out. Have you seen that?

GARDNER: No.

LEE: Well, it's the horizontal format. You know, the kind that you can't hold straight. It flops, you know,

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM 1630 TO 1880
BY
JOHN B. HENNINGSEN
OF THE
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
PUBLISHED BY THE
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
1880

it's oriented this way. The reason it's oriented that way is that they adopted a system which is called--it's very old-fashioned, as a matter of fact, and it goes back to Élie Faure in his five-volume History of Art published in the twenties--"time line." That's the buzz word now: "time line." So that you have-- Well, it's like 1492 written large.

GARDNER: Culturally neutral?

LEE: You go across the years. For the twelfth century, you start on the left-hand side of this horizontal thing, and you have Europe, different countries, and then on the right side, you have the Oriental, ancient, or African or pre-Columbian or whatever it is. First of all, it does not relate to the way the collection is arranged. Secondly, it's an arbitrary selection of a chronology, across the board, in cultures that may have developed and matured at totally different speeds and from totally different date origins. So there is no real significance, in that a Chinese painting of the thirteenth century of the Sung dynasty is on the same spread as a Duccio or a Giotto. It's a gimmick, pure and simple. And furthermore, that horizontal format means it's very hard to use. And of course it's not physically very strong. Problems. Is that enough on handbooks?

GARDNER: Did you find that the handbook was very popular?

THE HISTORY OF THE
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IN TWO VOLUMES
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OF THE BARR

VOLUME THE SECOND
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON FROM THE
YEAR 1700 TO THE PRESENT TIME
IN TWO VOLUMES
BY NATHANIEL BENTLEY
OF THE BARR

BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
J. B. BENTLEY, 1792

Was it something that people really liked to have?

LEE: Well, they sold steadily. I mean, you didn't have people coming up and salivating, saying, "I must have my latest handbook." But they sold steadily. They ran out, and we then did a new one. I think, as I remember--I have to check--there probably were two-- Yes, there were two editions of the handbook. I think we printed, as I remember, something in the neighborhood of five thousand. Cleveland, you know, is the failure story of publications in terms of sales and catalogs and things like that. It's fairly consistent. Cleveland is not in that kind of crossroad situation that people in Chicago, New York, Washington, London are. There's a certain critical mass I think you have to have before you get into these big numbers, unless you do something specifically to attract big numbers. So that if we did an exhibition catalog for a major show, for Chinese Art under the Mongols: [The Art of the Yüan Dynasty, 1279-1368], for Treasures from Medieval France, for the Bernardo Cavallino [of Naples] show, the Caravaggio and His Followers exhibition-- Those were all major shows. They were things that had not been done and that should have been done. That is, they had a real scholarly raison d'être. They were attractively done and they were not enormous telephone-book-type things. But we learned the hard way that it was very hard to sell



more than three thousand copies. As a matter of fact, in some cases, it was better to sell two thousand at even cost price, that you'd come out of it better than if you got the cheaper unit price of three thousand or five thousand and you were left at the end with, you know, two thousand unsold copies. So that's difficult for museums like Cleveland, Saint Louis, Kansas City, Toledo. They have a different problem than these other museums that can think in terms of volume. I think that hurts.

GARDNER: Okay. Should we move on to operations?

LEE: Yes. Operations. The financial department at the Cleveland Museum of Art, before the Hanna bequest, was a little bit like something out of Dickens. Mr. [Walter A.] Croley's title was comptroller, and that's what he did. He was the comptroller, and his assistant, who was sort of the bookkeeper, was Albert Grossman. Mr. Croley was a very nice man, but he was a chief bookkeeper type. There was no general manager for all the operations, such as the guards. The guards were under the captain of the guards. The utility men, carpenters, and those people were under the building superintendent. The restaurant, the bookstore, the sales desk, the personnel-- Everyone reported to the director. I mean, William was like a patriarch. He also liked to play one thing against another. We had a conservation department, and you had an



enlarged library operation, you had the publications department, you had more guards, you had more--

And we had a pension plan that was something unbelievable. I get two pension checks. One is from the old plan that was in effect when I came to Cleveland and was in effect until I became director. That check I get monthly from John Hancock [Mutual Life Insurance Company], and that represents a total of six or seven years of service and is \$85 per month, which I take to be around \$960 to \$1,000 a year. That was the kind of scale on which the pension plan existed for all these people. Then they would make adjustments for people who were sort of a little higher up in the hierarchy or who-- It was not done according to any kind of equitable system. There was some favoritism involved too. And Harold Clark, God bless him, we discussed this and he agreed that there had got to be a reorganization of the pension plan and the union too. He was very much interested in this subject. So we got John Hancock in and we went through this thing. I remember we went through several months. Finally we got a pension plan that was equitable and reasonably generous that really helped people out. But the point was that there was no one who was sitting on top of all this and really paying attention to it who was interested in that kind of thing. I mean, I'm not interested in pension plans,



except in a very general way.

Albert Grossman was put in charge of operations, which included all finance and so forth. We used to have financial reports coming from the comptroller to the director quarterly. The curators really didn't know anything [that was] was going on. Well, you know, strange things can happen over a period of three months in terms of where you are in your budget. One thing that Harold Clark and Albert Grossman and I agreed upon one hundred percent was that the most important single document to understand how the museum worked and what it was doing was the budget. That should be a very thoroughly researched document every year, and it should be organized in a way that reflects the actual activities in the museum by departments and what their specialties are. Further, there should be a monthly report which shows exactly, in the same format as the budget, what the situation was at that red-hot second. That actually was a lifesaver, because it meant that we really were on top of budgeting. Albert was even more parsimonious than I was. I would try to be generous, and he would try to hold me up and-- But we worked it out. The result was that we really knew where we were and we were able to have a balanced budget year after year after year. We also knew when we were getting into trouble or when we were getting into



surpluses before it actually happened and it just was a tick, a blip on the screen. Albert also brought some order and system into the cleaning personnel, the work personnel, dealing with the union and the union representative. Every year the president of the board, Harold Clark, the director, and Albert, would sit down with the union representative and the steward plus three members of the staff, who were designated by the union, and we would work out grievances all at the same time as the budget was being done. It was all part of what was put into the budget. So that the operations side of the museum, the actual physical and the maintenance of the building and the inspection-- I think we discovered that the roof of the 1916 building, all the display lights and the skylights--the skylights especially--had not been checked and looked at carefully for a long time and that rust had penetrated through the steelwork into the masonry.

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